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*THE BURNT MILLION.*

BY JAMES PAYN,

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

MR. ROSCOE had certainly no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of his interview with the head of the house. Agnes had agreed with his views, confessed herself as willing to assist his plans, and had almost forborne to question him about them. She had been content to leave matters in his hands, without even asking him what he had meant by saying that he had hoped to turn this misfortune that had happened to them to their own advantage. He would have told her if she had pressed him, but it was a relief to his mind—already so heavily weighted—that she had not done so. He was not grateful to her, however, because he knew that she had something to gain by her forbearance, and was also desirous to make up to him for the insolence (as he termed it) of her recent behaviour. Philippa he foresaw would not be so easily won over. She had not so much to gain by pleasing him, and nothing to atone for. He would have to explain his scheme to her, and it would be much more distasteful to her than it would have seemed to her sister; she was more sentimental and soft-hearted, or, as he put it to himself with his usual frankness, in all things that concerned the feelings a greater fool. On the other hand, there were reasons why he could 'say things' to Philippa which he could not venture upon with her

elder sister. He could be more masterful with her, if need were, and also, strange to say, more tender without compromising himself. Indeed his very first act on entering her boudoir was to put his arm round her waist and kiss her.

'Goodness gracious!' she exclaimed, 'what is the matter, Edward?'

It was such a strange remark to make upon such an occurrence, had it been an unprecedented one, that we must take it for granted it had happened before; indeed, it was not his caress at all, but the expression of his face, which was very grave and sad, which had evoked it.

'A letter, my dear Philippa, has come to my brother to-day, which brings very bad news to you and me, and will require all your philosophy to bear it. Instead of an obstacle to our happiness being, as we fondly thought, removed, it threatens us with ruin.'

'With ruin?'

'Yes; with nothing less. It is no use deceiving ourselves upon that point, nor will it help us to reproach me for follies, as you have called them, of which I have been guilty. I will own I have been a fool at once, and so save time, which has become indeed an object to us. It is no longer a question of patience with us, but of now or never. Read *that*.' And he put the document into her hand with a deep-drawn sigh.

She read it with a frightened face, and none of the fury her sister had shown.

'This is indeed most cruel and unexpected,' she said.

'Unexpected? Why, of course it is,' he answered with irritation; 'but as to cruel, you refer, I suppose, to the measures which it will be necessary to take with Grace; you can hardly imagine that I intend it to take effect as regards ourselves.'

'But how is it possible to avert it?'

'Well, for one thing this marriage of course must be broken off.'

'Grace's marriage? Break off dear Grace's marriage with Walter? Oh, Edward, you could surely never have the heart to do it!'

'I mean to try, at all events,' he answered curtly. 'You must be a born idiot, Philippa, if you do not see the absolute necessity of it. A girl of her age is not so grievously to be pitied because she has made a false start in her first love venture. Women don't break their hearts about men whom they have only known for a few months.'

'I will never consent to parting them,' cried Philippa, bursting into tears.

'What? You prefer beggary, do you? Fortunately for you, I have an equal interest with yourself in this matter, and beggary will not suit *me*.'

'But why should there be anything of the kind, Edward? I know dear Grace's noble nature, and am very sure that when she comes to hear of this—for I conclude Walter has not told her——'

'I conclude so too,' interrupted Mr. Roscoe with bitter scorn, 'for I have good reason to believe that Walter does not know it himself. You may also be assured that he never will know it.'

'You have opened his letter then?'

'Most certainly I have. If you should ever dare to dream of telling him so, I would throw it in the fire, and have you locked up for a mad woman for having imagined such a story. Scruples indeed! *You* to have scruples! Have you forgotten how your father died?'

'Oh, Heaven have pity upon me, since man has none!' cried the wretched woman, throwing herself into a chair and bursting into a torrent of tears.

'I am sorry to have been compelled to allude to so painful an incident,' observed Mr. Roscoe coldly, 'but I cannot stand hypocrisy. You strain at a gnat after having swallowed a camel, hump and all. I really must decline to listen to such folly. I came here for your advice and assistance——'

'*My* advice!' she interrupted bitterly. 'When did you ever ask for my advice, or take it when it was offered?'

'What I understand you to propose, madam, is that we should throw ourselves upon the generosity of Mr. Walter Sinclair *per* Grace, his wife, and accept whatever terms he may in his magnanimity offer us. For my part I absolutely refuse to accept his charity. It would be too humiliating, and also, I am very sure, too limited. If *that* be your advice, you are correct in supposing that I think it worthless. Let me confine myself then to asking your assistance. I can get on without it, and as to any opposition on your part it would be fruitless, and you would repent it to the last hour of your life, though it would not perhaps be a very long one. Lives have been cut short in domestic circles before now——'

'Oh, spare me, spare me!' groaned the unhappy woman.

'By all means. I wish not only to spare you but to benefit

you all I can, if you will only be a reasonable being. Though your help is not indispensable, it would be very welcome, and would certainly be of service in breaking the blow which necessity compels me to inflict upon your sister. I regret it as much as yourself, but I have a plan in my head which in the end may not only turn this seeming misfortune to our advantage, but console Miss Grace for the loss of her lover.'

'Console her?' answered Philippa with amazement. 'What can ever console a girl for such a loss?'

'Another lover.'

The suggestion was offered in all good faith, and without the least touch of sarcasm, but had the speaker guessed its effect upon his hearer he would have given a good deal to have recalled its utterance. There are some subjects on which it is very dangerous for a man to confess his cynicism to one of the other sex. Philippa made no answer, which gratified her companion, since it bespoke submission to his will, but what he had said had fallen upon the little spark of respect for him that was still alive in her breast, and extinguished it for ever. Love still survived there, as it will do long after respect is dead; but it was not the love it had been. Passion had long fled from it, Trust had well-nigh vanished too, and even Hope itself was on the wing.

'Yes, Philippa,' he continued after a long pause, 'it is my intention that Grace shall marry my brother Richard.'

Numb and dulled as the poor woman's feelings had become under the weight of that inevitable will, his words still evoked a shrill note of astonishment.

'Richard!'

'Yes; you women plume yourselves on your sagacity in such matters, but I'll wager that the notion of Richard being in love with your sister has never entered into your mind. I have perceived it, however, for many a day; it is only with the utmost difficulty that he can conceal his passion for her.'

The tidings interested while it shocked her; no matter how cramped and crushed may be a woman's heart, there is one subject to which it never ceases to vibrate with sympathy.

'He has concealed it,' she observed. 'I am certain that Grace knows nothing of it.'

'Of course not—not a word, not a whisper, thanks to me; any hint of it would have been most inconvenient, perhaps even detrimental to our plans. I persuaded him that his suit would be



the maddest folly. It will be much easier to persuade him of the contrary. And if—as will as surely happen as I am a living man—these second nuptials shall be accomplished, instead of her having a husband of whose nature we know little, and who might have given us trouble in a hundred ways, she will have one who in my hands will be as clay to the potter, and so out of this nettle Danger we shall pluck the flower Safety.'

'And Grace?'

'Well, Grace of course will be our difficulty, although the only one. I have a plan, however, which, sooner or later, will succeed even with Grace. We cannot of course expect that she will transfer her affections from one to the other so quickly as would be desirable. In love affairs a girl is never reasonable; but still I have reasons, I think, that will not only persuade her to give Walter up, but will at least clear the way for Richard. She is well inclined to him already in a sisterly way. You don't think much of that, and I don't wonder; I use the phrase of course in its common acceptation, and she is *not* his sister. We all know what comes of such Platonic attachments, when no nearer one can be got. A woman who has been "disappointed," as she calls it, will marry out of pique rather than not marry at all. She feels the need of "something to cling to," and one stick will serve her turn as well as another.'

He paused, but there was no reply.

'Do you hear me, madam? Are you favouring me with your attention?' he inquired passionately.

'Oh, yes, I hear you!' answered Philippa despairingly, 'and alas! I understand you very well.'

'Then also heed. The help that I require from you is simply this: to cease from expressing any of that morbid sympathy which you have lavished—as it now turns out, have wasted—upon this interesting young couple. Without being rude to Walter, be cold and discouraging to him. Let him understand, but without giving him a pretext for asking for an explanation, that something has caused you to change your views of his pretensions. If he does ask, refer him to me. The task I set you is an easy one enough.'

'It is not easy,' she answered in broken tones, 'but since needs must, I will perform it.'

'There's a good girl!' He patted her cheek—it was as cold as marble—as if she had been a child. 'You are about to do what

is very distasteful to you, I know, and as you believe solely for my sake; but it is for both our sakes. We shall be stronger—you and I—when this has come to pass, against the common enemy. Grace's husband—and therefore Grace—will be on our side. Again I say that this document, which now seems so harmful to us, will prove beneficial to our interests.'

'What are you going to do with it?' she inquired in a faint voice.

'Well, that is my business. I shall probably put it in the fire. Now I am going to Grace.'

'With that in your pocket?' she murmured apprehensively.

'Why not? She can no more read it through this cloth'—and he tapped his breast—'than she can read my heart on the other side of it. It will be the hardest morning's work that I have ever had to do; but "men must work and women must weep," is the sentence that Fate has passed upon us. Good-bye, my dear, and wish me well through with it,' and once more he touched her cheek with his false lips.

She forced a smile as he left her, but it vanished as the door closed behind him, and was succeeded by a look of misery and despair.

'Wish him well!'—no, she did not even wish herself well. It was blasphemy to hope that good would come to anybody from what he was about to do. She pitied Grace from the bottom of her soul, but she pitied herself too. If Grace were doomed to lose her lover, she too had lost faith in the man to whom she had given her love. "'She cannot read my heart," he said,' she moaned piteously; 'how should she when he has no heart to read?'

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## CHAPTER XL.

### THE NAKED TRUTH.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Roscoe had the *entrée* to Grace's bower, as he had to her sisters', a visit from him, in her case, was by no means such a matter of course. His knock at her boudoir door, with the announcement of his name, in reply to a somewhat severe 'Who is that?'—in a tone that is used by one who is engaged in some occupation not agreeable, but in which he does not wish to be disturbed—did not receive the ready 'Pray come in,' that he

had been favoured with on the two previous instances. He was kept waiting at the door time enough to note the circumstance moreover, when the permission to enter was given, it did not escape him that it was in a despondent voice. Grace indeed had been crying, as he saw at a glance, and also the reason of it, for although she had put away Mr. Allerton's letter, its envelope still lay on the table.

'I wish to have a few words with you, Grace, if you please.' He never addressed her thus familiarly unless the subject was of an importance that seemed to excuse it.

She bowed, and motioned him to a chair. Her silence, as he rightly judged, was compulsory; she could not trust herself to speak.

'I am afraid you have had bad news this morning,' he murmured sympathetically.

'Nothing to speak of,' she answered coldly—so coldly indeed that the tone seemed almost to imply, 'nothing to speak of to *you*; it is my own affair.'

'I deeply regret it,' he answered gently, 'and the more so since I am myself—most unwillingly, as you may be sure—the bearer of evil tidings. But perhaps I have been anticipated,' and he looked significantly at the envelope.

'You mean the letter I have just received from Mr. Allerton? No, there is nothing in it of which I was not aware before.'

'He has heard, I suppose, of your proposed engagement' (she looked up indignantly at that word 'proposed,' as he had known she would, and he kept his own eyes upon the floor), 'and has written to express his dissatisfaction with it. He takes a lawyer's view of it, no doubt; points out you are throwing yourself (by which he means your fortune) away in marrying one forbidden by your father's will. If he has no argument to use but that, he might have saved his time, and you your six and eightpence. It was my impression that he had written of a more serious obstacle.'

'I do not understand you, Mr. Roscoe—what other obstacle? Not that it matters; nothing that Mr. Allerton or any other person could say could affect the matter of which you speak. Indeed, I would not even listen to it.'

'Quite so,' he answered gravely; 'no one has a right to interfere with your private affairs. Your regard for Mr. Sinclair is a sacred matter—I feel that myself. Let us suppose that what has come to my knowledge—and must needs come to his—affects

some one else, not him. If any thing I am obliged to tell you seems to chime in with anything he has told you of his previous history, put that aside: judge the whole matter from without, as a mere looker-on, and decide upon it without favour or prejudice. That will be the honestest way of coming to a right decision.'

She looked up at him, less in alarm than scorn, though she *was* alarmed, he saw; what her face expressed besides its fear was a doubt of his being the sort of person to recommend what was right, and especially upon the ground of honesty. The suggestion of this rather assisted him in his present purpose, because it set him against her, and stifled the feeble pity he had felt for her.

'I must go back a little,' he continued, 'to start with, into what to you must seem ancient history—to what happened years ago, when you were a little child.

'A certain man of business in the City, very wealthy, but whose only desire in the world was to increase his store, had a poor cousin in the country, who, with the exception of his own family, was his only relative. They had been boys together at school, and he had perhaps as much regard for him as he was capable of feeling for anything outside his money bags. This cousin applied to him respecting the investment of a few thousands—almost all he had in the world—and the other gave him his advice. It was the most that he was ever known to give to anybody, and indeed it was generally of value. When I say "gave," however, it was never given for nothing. He was by trade a money-lender—a skinflint, or rather a skin-diamond, for he seldom concerned himself with any client who could not directly or indirectly (though more often the latter) repay him handsomely for his services. In the case of his cousin, however, he charged him nothing (at first), and recommended him an investment which, though speculative, he had every reason to believe would turn out to be exceedingly profitable. It was, if I remember right (but this can be easily certified), a certain mine in Cornwall. The money-lender indeed thought so well of it that he had placed a sum to which the other's subscription (though it was, as I have said, his all) was a mere bagatelle in the speculation himself. As time went on the mine ceased to perform the promise it had given, and its shares fell lower and lower in the market till they almost became valueless. Then the man in the country, grievously alarmed, as he well might be, wrote to his kinsman for his advice again. 'I am sure you did the best for me you could,' he

said, 'and indeed must have lost your own money. Of course I have not a word of reproach to write, but I am well-nigh ruined, so be so good as to dispose of these unhappy shares for me at whatever they realise. I am resolved to go to America, there to endeavour to make a livelihood for my wife and son, which is denied them here.' It was a pathetic letter (I read it with my own eyes), and almost touched the money-lender, but not quite. He knew more about the mine than anyone else, except its manager, who was in his pay, and had privately given him news that a lode of great extent had just been discovered in it. Without an expenditure of sixpence, and by merely telling his cousin to "hold on," he could have made a fortune for him; but the temptation of adding some thousands, at the price of a few pounds, to his ill-gotten gains, was too strong for him; he wrote to the poor cousin, saying that the shares were unsaleable, but that for the sake of old times, and because the same blood ran in his veins (for there was nothing on earth that the man did not make subservient to his own aggrandisement), he would purchase them himself for, I think (but this also can be ascertained, no doubt), for 300*l*. The offer was accepted; the cousin emigrated with his wife and son on the proceeds of the transaction, and the money-lender within twelve months made 20,000*l*. by it.'

'What has this hateful act by this wicked man to do with me?' inquired Grace defiantly.

'Nothing. You hear of it of course for the first time; but let me conclude my story. The cousin by some means or other learnt how he had been cheated, and told the story to his son, without, however (as I have good reason to believe, though I cannot understand this reticence), revealing the name of the relative who had robbed him. The result of that robbery was that the mother, succumbing to fatigues and privations, died soon after, and the father, after a hard and wretched life, was slain by Indians; the son——'

He paused, and looked at Grace with keen significance. Her face was white as death; but there was a fire in her eyes and in her tone, as she exclaimed, 'Go on.'

'The son, I am grieved to say, Grace, is Walter Sinclair, and the man who robbed his father was *your* father.'

'You lie!' she thundered. 'My father was the best and kindest of men.'

'Was he Ask your friend, Mr. Allerton—*he* knows. Ask Lord Morella who was the money-lender who caught his son, Lord Cheribert, in his meshes, and stripped him of thousands. Ask your sisters, and they will tell you what everybody else is aware of except yourself, that the man who thus made gold his idol, and sacrificed his kinsman to it (as he had sacrificed hundreds of others), was no other than Joseph Tremenhare.'

Of the last part of this speech Grace had no knowledge; she had thrown up her arms before it was concluded, and with a piteous cry of desolation and despair had fallen on the ground in a dead faint. Under such circumstances man, unless he is medical, is generally useless and inclined to run away, but Mr. Roscoe was not an ordinary specimen of his sex; moreover, even had he preferred 'absence of body to presence of mind,' the apprehension of what she might say to other ears on coming to herself kept him in the path of duty. He lifted her up in his strong arms and placed her on the sofa, from which he removed the pillow, and sprinkling a little water on her face from the jug in the next room, which he did not scruple to enter, awaited events with a philosophical mind. Grace did not come to herself for some minutes, and when she did so still remained with closed eyes, only too conscious doubtless of whom she would behold should she open them.

'Does Walter know?' were her first words.

'No, dear Grace, of course not,' answered her companion comfortingly. 'I came here to spare you that; but of course he must be put in possession of the facts sooner or later. From what I have heard of his devotion to the memory of his father, what has come to light is a thing that he can never forget or forgive. Of course you had nothing to do with it, but there is the sentiment, you see.'

She put up her hand as if in appeal for silence.

'You feel that yourself, I'm sure. It is only too obvious that all between you and him must be over. There is no need to mention the real cause to anybody—not to Mr. Allerton, for instance; but only to your sisters, and even that is only as you please. Trust to me to arrange this unhappy matter so as to give you—and indeed Walter also—as little pain as possible. You will find no doubt in the letter you received this morning an excuse that will satisfy the outside world.' Her hand moved feebly in the direction of the door. 'You wish to be left alone. No doubt

that is your wisest course. This is a thing to be thought about and not talked about, even with one who has your interests so near at heart as I have. But I need scarcely impress upon you that there is only one course to be pursued. If you could make the effort, it would save a world of distress and pain to both of you if you would give me a few words in writing just to authorise me to act for you as regards Walter. Write, for instance, "Seek not to see me; Mr. Roscoe will tell you all," and sign it. That will be quite sufficient.' He pushed the writing materials that lay upon the table close to her hand, and she feebly raised herself, and with a dazed, despairing look obeyed him.

'That's a brave girl. Do not hate me, Grace, for the part I have been obliged to play in this miserable business,' and with that he left her.

She tottered to the door, locked it, and then sank into a chair. Except that her position was one of utter misery, for the moment she hardly realised it. She had fallen from the highest rung of the ladder of human happiness on the stones of blank despair. An hour ago she had possessed everything that fortune could give her, and now she was a beggar whose wretchedness no alms could repair. She had already lost her father, and it had been a bitter trial to her, but she had now lost him again in a far more dreadful manner. Would she had never known him at all! To think how she had loved him—yes, and he her; had she not been his 'pet,' his 'joy,' his 'little fairy'?—and all in vain—or as it seemed in vain; for she had in truth been loving another father, shaped out of her own childish imagination, and with whom this real one had nothing in common. She had no doubt now of her wretched and irretrievable error. A hundred evidences of what had been his calling, though not one of them had witnessed against him before, crowded on her mind. And even still—there was the pity of it—she loved him. An oppressor of the needy, one who took advantage of the necessities of his fellow-creatures, and an unfair advantage—a thief, a thief, a thief!—and yet she loved him still.

Her Walter too was lost for ever—a thought sufficient of itself to make death a boon (ah! if she could but die!); but for the moment even that thought was overwhelmed by the spectacle of what had been the idol of her life shattered in fragments before her, with its front of brass and feet of clay!



## CHAPTER XLI.

## RICHARD TO THE RESCUE.

'As easy as lying,' is a common proverb, but it must have been invented by an optimist; one might just as well say 'As easy as writing fiction,' which is not such a facile thing as those who have not tried it are apt to imagine. Mr. Edward Roscoe was a past master in the art of 'making the thing that is not as the thing that is,' but now and then even he found it a difficult job. When he left Grace Tremenhere's boudoir, the perspiration stood upon his brow, so severe had been his exertion in that way, though indeed he had not been exactly lying, but only what doctors and prize-fighters call 'putting on flesh' as regarded what was a very genuine skeleton of fact. The task that lay before him now seemed simple in comparison with that severe operation, for it is so much easier to deal with a man, where the affections are concerned, than with a woman, and his next 'call'—as ruinous as that of a broken bank on its unhappy shareholders—was on Walter Sinclair. Most men in his position would at least have taken that stolen document out of his breast-pocket, and either destroyed it or put it in some place of safety, before seeking an interview with its rightful owner; but Mr. Roscoe's heart was furnished with the triple brass of the poet, and indeed there was a great amount of the same material in the whole of his composition.

He found Walter at his desk busily engaged on some subject connected with his future work, 'plan, elevation, and section,' drawn by rule and line; a miracle of mechanical neatness to which Mr. Roscoe paid his little tribute of admiration before entering on the matter in hand.

'How I envy you your dexterity!' he observed. 'I am so clumsy with my fingers myself that such work as yours looks like magic. I am sorry to interrupt it, but the fact is I have got some bad news for you, which does not admit of delay.'

'Bad news!' exclaimed Walter, throwing down pencil and compass, and looking up at him with some suspicion as well as alarm, which the other did not fail to note.

'Yes; it is bad news, but, believe me, I am only the unwilling bringer of it, and not the cause.'

'From whom do you come then?'

'From Miss Grace. Here are my credentials.'



Walter took the strip of paper, and read in what he knew was her hand—though the writing was blurred and trembling—‘Seek not to see me. Mr. Roscoe will tell you all.—Grace Tremenhare.’

‘Great heaven!’ he said, ‘what is the meaning of this?’

‘The meaning is that she bids you farewell—that all is over between you.’

‘It is false!’ cried Walter passionately.

Mr. Roscoe shrugged his shoulders. ‘It is her writing, not mine,’ he said. ‘She chose me for the duty I am compelled to perform. You may add to its unpleasantness by insulting me, but I shall perform it all the same.’

‘Say what you have got to say, sir, though I will never believe that she told you to say it.’

‘That’s a matter which—if you don’t mind her breaking her heart—you can learn from her own lips, but she was in hopes that for the sake of all that has passed between you you would spare her.’

‘Go on!’ exclaimed the young man fiercely.

‘The person against whom your passion should be directed, if it must have an object,’ continued Mr. Roscoe, ‘is your friend, Mr. Allerton. He has discovered, I know not how, that you have been paying your attentions to Miss Grace, and a letter has come to her from him this morning. So much I know of myself. What the letter contains I have learnt only from her. He is her guardian and trustee, you know.’

‘I know *that*,’ put in the other impatiently.

‘Well, since that is the case, he has a right, not indeed to dispose of her hand, but to see the disposal of it does not involve the loss of her fortune. It is his simple duty, and one in aid of which he could, and would, invoke the law.’

‘That is not true,’ replied Walter; ‘I mean as regards the loss of her fortune. She told me so with her own lips.’

‘I think you must be mistaken there,’ said Mr. Roscoe mildly. ‘She could not have said that, because she is acquainted with the terms of her father’s will.’

‘She did not say so in so many words; but she told me, when I spoke of the gulf that existed between us as regards disparity of fortune, that there was no such gulf.’

Mr. Roscoe smiled a pitying smile.

‘She was right there, my poor fellow. If she married you there would indeed be no such disparity, because by doing so she

would have lost her fortune. It was love that caused her so to express herself; I do not deny for a moment that she loves you. We all know it, and in our love for her we were all willing that she should sacrifice her all, because we felt that in that sacrifice she would find her happiness. We are not lawyers, nor her trustees and guardians, as Mr. Allerton is. It is just possible (though I have a better opinion of you) that even now, in the teeth of his opposition (which, however, will be very formidable, I promise you), you may press your suit. But would it be honourable, would it become anyone calling himself a man, to take advantage of the simplicity and affection of a young girl under such circumstances, even if she were prepared to give up what is nothing less than a huge fortune, and to accept a life of poverty for your sake—and I honestly tell you that she is not so prepared, and sends me here to tell you so? Would you take her on such terms? If I know you, Walter Sinclair, as the son of an honest man, and an honest man yourself, you would not so take her.'

Walter turned from his companion, and with his elbows on the desk, and his face hidden in his hands, uttered one solitary groan, the knell of his bright hopes.

'Of course it is a terrible trial to you; but it was a worse one to her. The struggle between love and duty is always a cruel one; but Grace is duty itself. She idolised her father, and what he expressly forbade (as Mr. Allerton pointed out to her) she repents of having been about to do. You loved and respected *your* father, Walter; would *you* not hesitate to disobey his last solemn injunctions? I think you would.'

'Stop! there is something wrong here,' exclaimed the young man suddenly, rising slowly from his seat, and confronting his companion with so keen a glance that it needed all his hardihood to meet it coolly. 'When we were on the river this summer Lord Cheribert was with us. He was himself in love with Grace (how indeed could he help it, poor fellow!) Everyone knows it as well as I, except perhaps Grace herself; Mr. Allerton knew it, and if, as you say—but I forgot, he was a wealthy man.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Roscoe persuasively. ('Thank heaven, this fool has never looked at Josh's will for himself,' was his inward reflection.) 'Or, if he was not wealthy, he had vast expectations. He would have brought as much as he found. There were not the same objections to him as in your case, though there *were* objections.'

'Nevertheless I must see her,' exclaimed Walter desperately. 'There may be some way of escape, some loophole. Or the whole thing may be a mistake, a plot. You villain, you dog!' he cried, seizing the other by his coat-collar (within an inch of where the secret lay), 'if this is any plan of yours to part us, I will have your heart's blood.'

'Be so good as to unhand me, sir, for my own temper is somewhat short,' said Mr. Roscoe resolutely. 'This is scarcely the reward one looks for for breaking bad news to a fellow-creature. Go to Grace then, by all means, and put the finishing stroke to Mr. Allerton's morning's work. Only if it kills her, sir, it will be no less than murder.'

'Go, go, or there will be murder *here!*' exclaimed the young man furiously, and throwing open the door he thrust the other from the room, slammed the door behind him, and locked himself in. The whole thing did not take a minute, but it was full of 'action.' The impression on Mr. Roscoe's mind, though not upon his body, was that he had been *kicked* out.

'I will be even with you for this,' my man,' was what he muttered to himself with lips pale with rage, though, if he could have looked at matters with an unprejudiced eye, the obligation still lay upon the other side.

Left to his own maddening thoughts, Walter Sinclair sat at his desk, with that scrap in Grace's handwriting spread out before him, 'Seek not to see me. Mr. Roscoe will tell you all,' examining it with the anxious scrutiny one might have bestowed upon a cryptogram, who is conscious of a lack of clearness in his mind necessary for its elucidation. The words indeed were plain enough, and their meaning had been explained to him with sufficient distinctness, but was it the true meaning? Upon the whole he was forced to the conclusion that it was. If it was a lie, one line from Allerton, not to mention one word from Grace's lips, would, as Roscoe must be well aware, have confuted it. His arguments indeed had from a worldly point of view been overwhelming. Curst be the gold that is weighed in the scales with true love, but it kicks the beam. To Grace's guardian and trustee it could not seem otherwise, nor did he blame him; he only blamed the gold. With Grace herself he knew it had no such weight; but that very fact, as Roscoe had pointed out, should prevent him from pressing his suit. Her simplicity and ignorance, her girlish contempt for the gifts of fortune were only apparent allies; it would be

cowardly to take advantage of those means if he could bring himself to do so; there were her father's last injunctions which in her new-found love she had perhaps forgotten till the lawyer had reminded her of them. He had vaguely heard that Mr. Tremenhere had made his fortune as a money-lender, a circumstance that had in no way affected him. He might have been a good man for all that; that he had been a loving father to Grace was certain, and she had reciprocated his love with all the warmth of her nature. He was himself devoted to his father's memory, and, as Roscoe had cunningly surmised, that circumstance had great weight with him; he put himself in Grace's place, and sided with her, as it were, against himself.

Still to part with him without a word of farewell seemed unnatural, hard, and cruel, and utterly foreign to Grace's nature. True there was her handwriting before him, 'Seek not to see me.' The question was, by what process had those words been wrung from her? If she had written them of her own free will, his duty was plain: he must pack up his things and leave Halswater Hall at once.

When he had gone away—whither he could not tell; all places seemed alike to him, and all hateful—he would write and wish her farewell. She could reply to him or not, as she pleased. He staggered into his bedroom, and began putting his clothes together with blind haste. While thus occupied he heard a violent knock at his sitting-room door.

'Who is it?' he asked hoarsely.

'It is I, Richard Roscoe. Open.'

To see anyone just then was a trial he was ill-fitted to undergo; the thought of an interview with this man, half mad as he believed him to be, and wholly unfitted to sympathise with such a calamity as had befallen him, was especially distasteful to him.

'I am busy,' he called out.

'No matter,' was the impatient reply, 'I must see you.' And again came the loud summons at the door.

Fearing that the servants would be alarmed, and a disturbance created, when it was so necessary that anything of the kind should be avoided, he opened the door, and a moment afterwards repented of it.

Richard Roscoe stood before him, his face white and wet, his hair dishevelled, his eyes rolling in what seemed like frenzy,

and, in a word, more like a madman than he had ever seen him. He entered hastily, and at once relocked the door.

'Don't be afraid of me,' he said in breathless tones, as though he had perceived what was passing through the other's mind; 'I am not mad, though I have heard enough to make me so. What are you doing here? Packing up? I thought so. What is that paper in Grace's hand?'

In one stride he had reached the desk and read her words.

'How dare you?' exclaimed Walter passionately.

'Sir, I dare anything for Grace's sake,' was the unexpected rejoinder. "Mr. Roscoe will tell you all," she says, but she does not know the man as his brother does. "Seek not to see me." But you *shall* see her. Sit down, Walter Sinclair, and listen to me.'

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE BROTHERS.

AFTER the unpleasant parting Mr. Edward Roscoe had had with Walter Sinclair, it might have seemed probable that he would have had enough of interviews for the day; but not only was his brother Richard, to whom he had also a word or two to say, under the same roof and close at hand, but the very violence with which he had been treated in the one case was a spur to him in the other. His anger against the young man was very great, and, as it happened, the communication he had to make to Richard comprehended in it the greatest blow to Walter's hopes that could possibly be struck, 'which,' as a greater hypocrite than even Mr. Roscoe has observed before him, 'was very soothing.' He had no doubt, in spite of the self-restraint his brother had used in his relations with Grace, that his feeling towards her remained unchanged, and also that, notwithstanding his apparent friendship with her lover, he in reality regarded him with all the disfavour of an unsuccessful rival. Though far from falling into the error of less sagacious scoundrels in judging his fellow-creatures by himself, Mr. Roscoe was incapable of understanding such a virtue as magnanimity.

It was, in fact, in a tone which honestly expressed his convictions that as soon as he had entered his brother's room he observed with cheerful gravity:

‘Richard, my lad, I have got some good news for you!’

‘Indeed!’ answered Richard bitterly, as he rose from his seat to greet him, and put down the book he had been reading, ‘then it must be very strange news.’

‘It *is* strange news, my good fellow—stranger than anything you can have imagined, better than anything you can have dreamt of! Sit down and listen to it, for it will make your limbs tremble under you with joy. The engagement between Grace and Walter Sinclair has been broken off.’

‘What?’ Only a word, only a monosyllable, but what a tumult of emotions—hope and love and pity and amazement—did it express! The very face of the man was transfigured with them.

‘Yes, it is as true as death. The whole thing is over; Grace is now fancy free—is at all events free to have a fancy for someone else. There is now a chance for *you*, man!’

Richard looked at him with wondering eyes; he was so full indeed of astonishment that he was unable to take in the whole situation as it was thus suddenly presented to him. He did not even catch the meaning of his brother’s words, which could certainly not have been from their want of distinctness. His mind could hardly grasp the stupendous fact that had been disclosed to him, far less its probable consequences.

‘Have they quarrelled?’ he inquired in a hoarse whisper.

‘I am happy to say they have not, for we all know what lovers’ quarrels end in. The thing goes far deeper than that. You may take my word for it that they will never see each other again.’

Mr. Edward Roscoe’s word was a guarantee beyond suspicion to almost everybody at Halswater Hall, but (doubtless because of the eccentricity of Richard’s character) his brother seemed to doubt it; nay, with a frankness that, however common in the western wilds, is unusual in polite society, he coldly replied, ‘I don’t believe you, Edward. It is only because you have some end of your own to serve that you wish to make me credit such an incredible statement.’

‘A very natural supposition, my dear Dick,’ answered the other cheerfully, ‘and one that does honour to your intelligence; but you have only to step across the passage into Walter’s room to get the matter certified. I wouldn’t do it just now, if I were you, because he’s rather upset about it; there will be plenty of time before he starts, though I suppose he will be off this afternoon.’

‘Do you mean to say he is leaving Halswater?’

'Well, I conclude he is. From what I have told you you will see for yourself that no other course is open to him.'

'How did it come about?' inquired Richard.

'Well, it was all through Mr. Allerton. He is her guardian, and has forbidden the banns, as he has the power to do. If she had had any sense she would have married Walter at once, and then written to the lawyer to say so; but he has somehow discovered her engagement, and put his foot down on it. She will be wiser next time, Dick, you may take your oath of that.'

'And she has given him up because the lawyer tells her to do so?'

'I don't say that exactly; there are other reasons I am bound in honour not to go into, and which you must not press me about. But what is the main thing—as concerns yourself—the match is broken off.'

'Poor lad, poor lad!'

'Well, of course one is sorry for him, but one must look after oneself in this world. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and without your having any hand in it, without your having the least thing to reproach yourself with, a good opportunity has opened to you. I suppose, though you did what you could to smother your affection for the young woman, the cinders of it are still alive?'

'I love Grace—oh, yes, I love her still!' murmured Richard softly.

'That's right. You have a faithful heart, I know, Dick. So have I, though the object of its desire may be a little different. We both stick to our views. It runs in the family. Well, you know what I told you of the reason that first caused me to write you to come home from America. Circumstances did away with that reason for the time, but it has now sprung to life again. I had a matrimonial engagement for you in my mind, which I must confess is a merely practical one; the idea never entered into it that the young woman I designed for you would become the girl of your heart, but fortunately it has so turned out. A few hours ago she was altogether out of your reach, now she has come within it; you have only to put your arms about her, though I need not say that must be done in a most cautious and delicate fashion. At first of course she will be inconsolable for the loss of her first love; but little by little the gilt of sentiment will be rubbed off, and half a loaf—if I may say so without offence, for you



are really neither so young nor so good-looking as Sinclair—will seem better than no bread.'

'I see,' said Richard gently (he had his hands before his eyes, and seemed lost in thought), then added with effort, like one rousing himself from sleep, 'What would you have me do?'

'Just now, nothing. What I would recommend for the present is a "masterly inaction"; bide your time, by which of course I mean your opportunity; sooner or later it is sure to come. Be as gentle and sympathising with the girl as you please, but do not drop a word of love. She will want something to cling to, and in due course that should be you. There will be objections to you, as there were to Sinclair, on the lawyer's part, no doubt, but she will not sacrifice her happiness a second time for a mere sentiment, which by then moreover will have grown weaker. Upon the whole,' concluded Mr. Roscoe cheerfully, 'I really believe this misfortune, as it first seemed to us, will turn out but a blessing in disguise.'

'It is very good of you to take such an interest in my affairs,' observed Richard.

His brother glanced up at him very sharply, but there was nothing to be read on the other's face but a settled gloom.

'Blood is thicker than water, my lad,' answered Edward. 'It will give me unfeigned pleasure to see you comfortably settled in life; but I must frankly add that it will be also advantageous to myself. As Grace's husband you will be one of the family, and I shall be able to arrange matters with you much more easily than with a stranger—such as Sinclair for example. I shall feel easier in my mind, by the bye, when that young gentleman is out of the house.'

'You are sure that he will not insist upon seeing Grace before he takes his departure?'

'That is quite settled. To do him justice, he acknowledged when I pointed it out to him that it would be a most selfish act, and only give her unnecessary pain: it would also (which I did not point out to him) be a most dangerous experiment.'

'You mean to our interests?'

'Well, of course in the presence of the once beloved object she might lose sight of her obvious duty. She has made up her mind to perform it, and it would be madness to give him the chance of shaking her resolution. He too has come to the same decision. But if he could be persuaded to be off, without seeing



any member of the family, it would be a great point gained. He is attached to you, and has not the least suspicion of your feelings towards Grace; it would be well if you could persuade him to leave at once. You can tell him that I will gladly explain matters for him to Agnes and Philippa.'

'I will,' said Richard decisively.

'That's a good fellow. In the mean time, while you are getting him away, I will see that all is safe in the other quarter. Use all the arguments you can think of, and remember that you are now taking the first step on the road to your happiness. When I next see you I hope we shall have the cottage to ourselves,' and with that he left the room.

Notwithstanding the readiness with which he had fallen in with his brother's suggestion, Richard did not at once proceed upon his promised errand. He stood with his eyes closed and his hands clasped tightly before him; his lips moved as if in prayer, and the words, 'Deliver us from temptation,' fell from them in broken tones. If his brother could have seen him, he would certainly have said, 'This man is mad,' yet even so perhaps would not have deemed him too mad to marry. 'Walter, Walter!' he murmured to himself pitifully, and then in still tenderer tones, 'Grace, Grace!' The struggle within him, as it showed itself in his face, was terrible to witness; now his better nature and now his worse seemed to be getting the upper hand; at last the former triumphed, but with so great difficulty, with such a dead lift of all his powers for good, that he could not trust himself to let the debate begin again. He ran out of the room and knocked at Walter's door, crying 'Open, open!' Despair was in his heart, but from every thought of baseness it had been swept clean.

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#### CHAPTER XLIII.

##### METHOD IN HIS MADNESS.

THOUGH the look and manner of Richard Roscoe were so strange and wild, there was a fervour and earnestness in the tone in which he said, 'Sit down and I will tell you all,' that commanded Sinclair's attention; even a madman may have a story to tell that has nothing to do with his own state of mind, and may have pith and moment in it.

'You see before you an unfortunate man,' he began, 'but not

a rogue and a liar; you may trust me—yes, you may trust me now—as your father trusted me before; you may say indeed to his own undoing, but that was owing to no fault of mine, but to human weakness, and you have heard the worst of it from my own lips.’

‘I do not think you were to blame in that matter,’ said Walter gently; ‘if you were so, though it was a dreadful business, you have my full forgiveness, as I am sure you had that of my poor father.’

‘I thank you for saying so, my lad, with all my heart. With such words in my ears I should be a villain indeed were I to play you false. It is not a pleasant thing to have to say that one’s own mother’s son is a rascal, but there is no help for it but to confess as much; my brother Edward is one of that sort. He has been so from his cradle. Yes, Heaven knows I have tried to think otherwise, though I have had proof enough to the contrary. It seems an unnatural and ungrateful thing to speak, when I am at this moment sharing the roof and eating the bread that his good offices have obtained for me. And let me tell you, Walter Sinclair, he has promised me much more—a reward so great that I dare not even think of it—if I will only join him in his cursed plans and help to accomplish your ruin!’

‘My ruin?’ cried Walter in astonishment.

‘Yes, what else? To tear you from her you love, to take away the only object from you that serves to make life worth the living, to drive you out of Paradise into a barren land, where not a flower grows nor a bird sings, and the sun itself only rises to show you your own wretchedness—is not *that* ruin?’

‘It is indeed,’ groaned Walter; ‘I have been face to face with it for what seems an eternity, the last hour.’

‘Well, that shall not be. Had I been in your case no power on earth would have made me believe that those words written by Grace’s hand came from her heart.’

‘But your brother—’

‘Still less would I have believed *his* words,’ broke in the other contemptuously. ‘You did not know him, it is true, as I know him, but you knew *her*, and how could you think even for an instant that the advice of a lawyer or the reflection that she should lose money by it—were it millions—would cause that angelic nature to break her plighted word and forsake the man she loves?’

'It is not the money, Richard—though that has weight with me, though not with her—nor the arguments of her guardian; it is "the dead hand" that has turned her from me, the last injunction of a loving father.'

'That is what Edward told you, did he?' answered Richard bitterly. 'He said there were other reasons for which I must not press. His delicacy of mind was always extraordinary, though he forgot it for a moment in taking it for granted that I was even a greater scoundrel than himself. I don't believe his story. There is at all events some huge lie at the bottom of his mountain of words; there always is, if you dig deep enough. I am here to help you to dig.'

'I am infinitely obliged to you,' said Walter hoarsely; 'only show me where to put the spade in.'

'Well, to begin with, stop where you are till you find there are real grounds for your departure, and, above all, take no dismissal save from Grace's own lips.'

'She says, "Seek not to see me,"' answered Walter piteously. 'I love her too dearly to disobey her.'

'She does *not* say it, she *writes* it,' answered Richard confidently, 'which is a very different thing. I have known men, captive in Indian hands, compelled to write things to their friends quite other than what their hearts dictated, yet their end, poor souls, was all the same; and so it will be with Grace, if you give way to this wretched scruple. When he has his point to gain Edward is an Indian—subtle, treacherous, and, though not delighting, as they do, in the torture they inflict, utterly callous to it. Somehow or other—I have not his wits, and cannot read his brain, but I know *the man*—somehow or other Grace Tremenhare has become his captive; his net is round her—she is beating her tender wings against it, poor soul, poor soul!—but his will is her will, and these words his words. If such a stake were worth speaking of, I would lay my life upon it.'

The rude eloquence of his words was backed by an earnestness and conviction that would have made their way to any heart, even had it harboured no such desire to be convinced as Walter's did.

'I will stay here till Grace tells me to go,' he said. 'How can I ever thank you enough for bringing me this ray of hope?'

'You never can,' was the grave rejoinder. 'Thank Heaven that sent me here instead. Remain in your room, whatever happens, till I come back with tidings of how the land lies.'

Budge for nobody, and least of all for my brother ; he has no more right to give you notice to quit the Hall than I have. No one has any right to do it save Grace only.'

It was strange to see one so eccentric thus dictating a course of action to another of sane mind, and so it struck Walter himself ; but when we desire anything very much we are not solicitous to inquire closely into the capacity or the motives of those who volunteer their assistance to us. The notion of any plot having been devised against him had never entered Walter's head, but, once there, it filled him with an indignation that would have astonished the plotter. A generous and impulsive nature is easily imposed upon, but having discovered that it has been so, it often becomes more dangerous to deal with than a more calculating one. It has a wrong to humanity to avenge as well as its private wrong—a sentiment which is absolutely unintelligible to the mere scoundrel. It was fortunate perhaps for all parties, but certainly for Mr. Edward Roscoe, that his impatience to see Walter out of the house did not urge him to pay that young gentleman another visit till some time had elapsed after Richard's revelation to him. When he did come, 'Bradshaw' in hand, Walter had cooled down, and was found, though with a somewhat trembling hand, engaged as before upon his plan-drawing.

'You have not much time to lose, my good fellow,' said his visitor with friendly solicitude, 'if you want, as I conclude, to catch the night mail. I have ordered the dogcart to be round in twenty minutes.'

'I am sorry that you should have troubled yourself, Mr. Roscoe, but if I go to-day it will only be to my old quarters at the head of the lake, and I should not go even so far as that without saying good-bye to Grace.'

'Not surely after her expressed wish that you should not seek to see her, Mr. Sinclair?' answered the other, in a tone of mild astonishment that suited ill with his knitted brow.

'Yes, I remember what she wrote perfectly well, but I intend to hear that wish from her own lips. It is possible that I may have given you a contrary impression. I have also heard all your brother had to say upon the subject ; but I have been thinking over the matter since, and that is the resolution to which I have come. And it is not to be broken.'

'Nothing, Mr. Sinclair, but your youth and inexperience can excuse such a conclusion,' observed the other calmly. 'It is an

outrage upon hospitality, to say the least of it. You will compel me to ask Miss Agnes herself to give you your *congé*.'

'I shall not take it even from her, but only from Grace herself.'

'Then you will at least take the consequences,' exclaimed Mr. Roscoe furiously, 'for in that case I will have you turned out by the servants.'

'You have dropped your mask, however,' replied Walter coolly—though indeed the other's face had lost its natural expression and become a mask, with rage and malignity painted upon it—'that saves me all further circumlocution, at which I am at such a disadvantage with you. As for turning me out, I possess a revolver, and if any violence is offered to me I shall look upon you as the instigator, and give you its contents. You will have the "first chance," as the lawyer said to the mortgagee.'

As the other stood silent for a moment, and menacing, as a volcano before its outbreak, Agnes was seen to hurry by, crying out, 'Mr. Roscoe, Mr. Roscoe!'

He threw open the door at once—not sorry, perhaps, to have his interview cut short. 'I am here; what is the matter?'

'I am afraid Grace is very ill,' she answered excitedly. 'Phillippa and I can do nothing with her.'

Walter came forward to the door. The flush of anger had passed from his face, which now only showed anxiety and alarm.

For the moment Agnes forgot his changed relations with her sister, and with womanly sympathy observed:

'Yes, indeed, she is very ill, Walter. The doctor should be sent for at once, Mr. Roscoe.'

'To be sure. I will order Saltfish to be saddled at once; she will do the five miles in twenty minutes. Perhaps Mr. Sinclair himself would like to go.'

'By all means,' Walter was about to say, but a glance at the other's Mephistophelean face prevented it; he remembered too Richard's last injunction, 'Budge for nobody, and least of all for Edward,' and was not this Edward's advice?

'No, no!' put in Agnes quickly. 'The mare is queer-tempered and must have one she knows for her rider. Tell Charles to go.'

Mr. Roscoe turned away at once to obey her.

Having received no instructions from her domestic adviser as to giving him his *congé*, Agnes would, as Walter sagely judged, be open to reason.

'With sickness in a house, Miss Agnes,' he said softly, 'it is generally advisable for the "stranger within its gates" to depart. But being at the cottage here, it is impossible that I should be in anybody's way. Under the circumstances, therefore, I must ask your leave to remain where I am till I am assured of dear Grace's safety.'

Perhaps Walter's youth and good looks pleaded for him, though she had a suspicion that his presence would be unwelcome to Mr. Roscoe, or perhaps Grace's illness touched her woman's heart. She hesitated, and looked round as if for advice, but Mr. Edward was in the stable yard and out of reach, and in the end nature had her way.

'Your request does not appear to me unreasonable, Mr. Sinclair,' she replied—then added more doubtfully, 'So far as I am concerned, of course you are very welcome to my hospitality.'

'Then no one else has a right to deny it to me,' said Walter quickly.

This was imprudent, because it suggested the very obstacle Agnes had in her mind.

'That is so,' she answered; 'still, circumstances may arise—What is it, Mr. Richard?'

Richard Roscoe was approaching from the Hall, evidently in a state of great excitement. 'What is it?' he echoed vehemently. 'Merely that you are, amongst you, trying to send to heaven before her time the sweetest soul that ever dwelt in human form. Philippa tells me that Grace is in a high fever, and does not recognise you as her sisters—not, Heaven knows, that *that* is any proof of madness!'

'You must be mad yourself to say so,' exclaimed Agnes with indignation. 'I shall certainly acquaint your brother with the language you have thought fit to use to me.'

'He may murder me if he likes, but he shall not murder Grace,' cried Richard. 'I know the temptation is very great to all of you. You want to divide by two instead of by three.'

'What, in Heaven's name, does the man mean?' asked Agnes, addressing herself to Walter.

'*He* doesn't know,' continued Richard scornfully; 'but my cunning brother knows, and I think *you* know. You will tell him what I say, and get the house cleared of me as well as of Sinclair. Then you will have Grace all to yourselves to do as you please with, and there will be murder done.'

‘If there is enough sanity in this man to make it worth while to note his words at all,’ said Agnes with dignity, ‘I call upon you, Mr. Sinclair, to tell him what I have just said to you: “that you are free to stay here as long as you please.”’

‘That is so, is it?’ said Richard, as Walter bowed in confirmation; ‘then here we remain together to keep watch and ward over the innocent, and to take vengeance, if they work their wicked will upon her, against the guilty.’

‘There is no one, Richard, who means any harm to dear Grace, I am sure,’ said Walter soothingly. ‘The doctor has been sent for, and let us hope his report may be more favourable than you imagine.’

‘You don’t know Indians as I know them,’ observed Richard laconically, and with that he entered the cottage and retired to his own room.

‘Permit me, Miss Agnes,’ said Walter gently, ‘to express my sorrow that I should have been compelled, in your presence, to listen to such wild and wandering words. If I might venture to advise you, I would say, “Let them be forgotten.” It is clear that poor Mr. Richard is not himself, though I cannot imagine what has caused him to entertain the monstrous idea to which he has given expression.’

‘Nor I,’ said Agnes coldly; her anger had not left her, but was rather subsiding. The charge Richard had made against her was most unjust, but it was not absolutely groundless, for that division by two instead of three was a sum Mr. Roscoe had often spoken of to her. Nor was the cause of Richard’s excitement, since she knew of his secret love for Grace, so inconceivable to her as she pretended.

*(To be continued.)*



### *NATURE AT NIGHT.*

I WELL remember what, as a country lad, impressed me most upon my first visit to London. It was the recollection of the fact that, during the small hours of the morning, I stood alone in the Strand. I had walked into the City from a suburban house, and as I paced rapidly along the pavement my footsteps echoed, and I listened to them until, startled, I came to a dead stop. The great artery of life was still; the pulse of the City had ceased to beat. Not a moving object was visible. Although bred among the lonely hills, I felt for the first time that this was to be alone—that this was solitude. I experienced a sense such as Macaulay's New-Zealander may experience when he sits upon the ruins of London Bridge; and then, for the first time, I knew whence the inspiration, and felt the full force and realism of Wordsworth's 'O God! the very houses seemed to sleep.' Than this I could detect no definite sound, only that vague and distant hum which for ever haunts and hangs over a great city.

Such a time of quiet as this can never be observed in the country. It matters not as to time or season; there seems to be no absolute and general period of repose. There is always something abroad—some creature of the fields and woods, which by its voice or movements is betrayed. Just as in an old rambling house there are always strange noises that cannot be accounted for, so in the by-paths of nature there are innumerable sounds which can never be localised. To those, however, who pursue night vocations in the country—gamekeepers, poachers, and others—there are always calls and cries which bespeak life as animate under the night as that of the day. This is attributable to various animals and birds, to night-flying insects, and even to fish. Let us track some of these sounds to their source.

'When comes still evening on, and twilight grey hath in her sober liv'ry all things clad'—then it is that the white owl comes abroad. Passing the remains of an old baronial hall, its piercing screech comes from the dismantled tower. Here the owls have lived time out of mind, and we have seen and heard them, asleep and awake, through every hour of the day and night. It is unnatural history to assert—as Mr. Gray asserts—that the



barn-owls ever mope, or mourn, or are melancholy. Neither are they grave monks, nor anchorites, nor pillared saints. A boding bird or a dolorous! Nonsense; they are none of these. They issue forth as very devils, and, like another spirit of the night, sail about seeking whom they may devour. The barn-owl is the 'screech' owl of the bird literature; the brown owl the true hooting owl. This species is found in old and heavily timbered districts, and it particularly loves the dark and sombre gloom of resinous pine woods. But the barn-owl is only the precursor of new life—life as animate under the night as that of the birds and butterflies under the day. We follow the path by the river, and on through the meadows. Among the nut-bush tops a bat is hawking for night-flying insects. Great white moths get up from the grass, and go looming away through the darkness. A bend in the stream brings us to a quiet river reach with brown pebbles and a shallow. A sentinel heron, that has been standing watchful on one leg, rises and flaps languidly away down the river reach. The consumptive figure of the gaunt bird stands by the stream through all weathers. He knows not times nor seasons, and is a great poacher. In the wind, when he takes his lone stand, his loose fluttering feathers look like driftwood caught in the bushes. He reminds one of the consumptive; but, unlike him, has wonderful powers of digestion, and, withal, an immense capacity for fish. Woe to the luckless mort or trout that comes within reach of his formidable pike, or to the attacking peregrine that he attempts to impale on his bill. The heron is essentially a wanderer, and, like Wordsworth's immortal leech-gatherer, he roams from pond to pond, from moor to moor. Herons come and go by the same routes; and night after night have we flushed our fisher from the selfsame shallow.

The peculiarly wild whistle of the curlew comes from out the night sky, and swifts screech for an hour after darkness has fallen. We are now by the covert side, and a strange 'churring' sound comes from the glades; it approaches nearer and nearer, until a loud flapping is heard in the bushes. The object approaches quite closely, and it is seen that the noise is produced by a large bird striking its wings together as they meet behind. Even in the darkness it may be detected that each wing is crossed by a definite white bar. The bird is the goatsucker or nightjar. Had we it in our hand, we should see that it was a connecting link between the owls and the swallows, having the soft plumage and

noiseless flight of the one, and the wide gape of the other. The object of the noise it produces is probably to disturb from the bushes the large night-flying moths upon which it feeds. The name 'goatsucker' the bird has from a superstitious notion that it sucks goats and cows—a myth founded probably upon the fact of its wide gape. It is certain that these birds may be seen flitting about the bellies of cattle as they stand knee-deep in the summer pastures. The reason of this is obvious, as there insect food is always abundant. Unless disturbed, the nightjar rarely comes abroad during the day, but obtains its food at twilight and dusk. Upon the limestone-covered fells it conforms marvellously to its environment, it being almost impossible to detect its curiously mottled plumage as the bird basks upon the grey stones, not more still than itself. Here it lays its two eggs, often without the slightest semblance of a nest, frequently upon the bare rock. Quite a peculiar interest attaches to this bird, inasmuch as it is furnished with a remarkable claw, the use of which is guessed at rather than known. This claw is serrated on its inner edge, and from actual experiments made upon nightjars in captivity we should surmise that its use is to free the long whiskers from the soft silvery dust which usually covers the bodies of night-flying moths. Certain it is that this substance gets upon the whiskers of the bird, and that the long hairs referred to are combed through the serrated claw. About the mouth the goatsucker is very swallow-like. It has a bullet-shaped head, large eyes, and a wide gape. Like the swallows, too, it has a weak ineffective bill and weak feet. This is explained by the fact that the bird, except when nesting, is rarely seen on the ground, and that it captures its insect prey on the wing. From twilight till grey does the fern-owl 'churr' and fly through the night.

As we proceed a splash comes from the river, and some large-winged fly has been sucked under. The night food comes on, and the reach boils. Water-rats, voles, and shrews are busy among the stones searching for insect larvæ, or gnawing the stalks of water-plants. The wafting of wings overhead betokens a curlew flying through the darkness to its feeding-grounds. The peculiarly lonely wail of the summer-snipe comes down stream, and a teal stretches her neck low over the sand. The river here resolves itself into a gorge, and runs darkly deep betwixt shelving rocks. The water ceaselessly moans and chafes down there in the darkness. Badgers have their haunt deep in the brambles, their tortuous

burrows running far out among the boulders. From the tree-tops we may watch them digging for roots and wasps' nests, and now and then snapping at flies. In a month the young ones will appear at the mouth of their burrow, and accompany their dam on her evening rambles. Passing the deep dub by the 'Force,' we find old Phil, the fisher, plying his silent trade even thus into the night. Phil leads his own life, and is contemplative as becomes his craft. Nature's every sight and sound he has, as it were, by heart, and he makes friends even with the creeping things. As we watch, a salmon, fresh from the sea, leaps from the silvery foam and flashes in the moonlight. One of the greatest night helps to the gamekeeper in staying the depredations of poachers is the lapwing. It is the lightest sleeper of the fields, starting up from the fallows and screaming upon the slightest alarm. Poachers dread the detection of this bird, and the keeper closely follows its cry. A hare rushing wildly past will put the plover away from its roost; and when hares act thus in the darkness, there is generally some good cause for it. The skylark and woodlark are both occasional night-singers, and it is quite common to hear cuckoos calling in the densest darkness. Still we follow on. Rabbits have made pitfalls in the loose yellow sand, and we see their white scuts as vanishing points in the darkness. These rustle away, and a hedgehog comes to the pool to drink. One of the latter we saw just now taken in the keeper's trap, the latter baited with a pheasant's egg. The squeal of a fougart comes from the loose stones. Later he will feed on the frogs now croaking from the ditch; these he kills by piercing their skulls.

If the cuckoo tells her name to all the hills, so does the sedge-warbler to the fluted reeds. And, like that wandering voice, our little bird seems dispossessed of a corporeal existence, and on through summer is 'still longed for, never seen'; and this though common enough, for you may wander long among the willows, with a bird in every bush, without one showing outside its corral of boughs. Wherever vegetation grows tall and luxuriant there the 'reed-wren' may be found. It travels in the night; you go out some May morning, and the rollicking intoxication of the garrulous little bird comes from out the selfsame bush from which you missed it in autumn. From the time it first arrives it begins to sing louder and louder as the warm weather advances, especially in the evenings. Then it is that it listens to the loud swelling bird-choir of the woods, selecting a

note from this and another from that; for the sedge-warbler is an imitator, a mocking bird, and reproduces in fragments the songs of many species. The little mimic runs up and down the gamut in the most riotous fashion, parodying not only the loud clear whistle of the blackbird, but the wholly differing soft sweet notes of the willow-wren. This is kept up through the night, and the puzzle is when the little musician sleeps. Our angler friends call it the 'fisherman's nightingale.' If the sedge-warbler ceases its song through any hour of the day or night, a clod thrown into the bushes will immediately set it going again. Yet what can be said of a song that a clod of earth will produce? Sometimes for a moment it is sweet, but never long sustained. In the north, where there are few ditches, the species frequents river-banks and the sides of tarn; in the south, it abounds everywhere in marshy places. Here the rank grass swarms with them; the thicker the reed-patch or willow the more birds are there. With perfect silence, a distant view of the bird is sometimes obtained at the top of the bushes, as it flits after an insect. As it runs up and clings to the tall grass stalks, it is pleasing both in form and colour. Among the grasses and water-plants it has its game preserves. Water-beetles, ephemera, and the teeming aquatic insects constitute its food. To watch through a glass the obtaining of these is most interesting. 'Reed-sparrow' and 'reed-wren' are pretty provincial names of the bird, each expressive enough.

A powerful perfume rises from the ground-weeds, and stooping low we detect dame's violet. The purple *Hesperis matronalis* emits its sweet smell only at night, and is fertilised by moths. This, too, holds good of the evening campion (*Lychnis vespertina*), only its scent is fainter. For this, however, the colour of its white petals amply compensates, as they are more easily seen in the darkness. Farther on we detect *Orchis bifolia*, which is also particularly sweet, and with the same object. All these emit fragrance at night, and are fertilised *only* by night-flying insects.

A crash—the underwood is rudely torn and a form disappears in the darkness. The crackling of boughs and of dead sticks marks on the stillness of night the poacher's sinuous path through the woods. Soon his old black bitch slinks by the hedge, clears the fence at a bound, and doggedly follows her master's footsteps. Crake answers crake from the meadows, as they have done through the night. Now they are at our feet—now far out

yonder. The night call of the partridge comes from the gorse, and the first pheasant crows from the larch branches. On the hill we wade through a herd of recumbent heifers, their sketchy forms sharply outlined in the darkness; these are quietly chewing the cud, and turn upon us their great soft eyes; some even press their dewy noses against us. The sweet breath of kine is wafted on the night, and the drone of many insects.

It is wonderful how lightly the creatures of the fields sleep. The faintest rustle brings chirping from the bushes, and in the densest darkness wood-pigeons coo. Jays screech in the glade, and the wood-owls hoot. One of the essentially night-singers is the grasshopper-warbler. Shy and retiring in its habits; it is rarely found far distant from aquatic vegetation. Moist situations are most congenial, as among the plants that affect them it finds its winged food. Although generally frequenting such spots as indicated, it sometimes seeks out considerable elevations. These are covered with coarse grass, bents, furze, and heather; and here, far into the night, it reels out its continuous cricket-like song. It returns to the same spot year after year, and although from these the particular notes may often be heard, the singer itself is nowhere to be seen. At the least noise it drops from the support on which it depends into the grass beneath, then is silent. The song is long continued, but the sounds are constantly shifting, marking the restless track of the singer on the night. It needs no stretch of imagination to detect in the notes of this species the similarity to the grasshopper, and the 'monotonous whirr like the spinning of a fishing reel' is fairly expressive of the bird's song. Perfect master of intricate maze and covert, it is never far from them. Even though it has ventured beyond its accustomed limits, its vigilance sends it back at the least noise, though its retreat is rarely observed, for instead of flying it creeps closely, never rising when alarmed. Again we pass into the darkness. Moles have thrown up ridges of loose light soils, and these cross us again and again. The short, sharp bark of a fox comes from the scrub, and soon dog and vixen answer each other across the dale.

Now we enter the park. The deer, disturbed in the darkness, get up and walk quietly away. A white fawn is outlined against the dark herd. Whenever an owner dies, say the menials at the Hall, a great bough is riven from the giant oak; whenever a new heir comes to the estate a white fawn is born.

Under the dark slabs by the river the otters breed ; but it is impossible to dislodge them. Iron-sinewed, shaggy otter-hounds have tried, but never with success. The fishermen complain of the quantity of fish which the otter destroys. Trout are found dead on the rocks ; salmon are there bitten in the shoulder, but only partially eaten. The evolutions of the otter in its native element are the poetry of motion minus only the metre. We take our place by a stream-side and breathlessly wait. A faint whistle, unlike that of any bird, comes up stream, and the dark still water is moved. Trout cease to rise, the whistle comes nearer, and some long dark object makes its way between the parted stems. The rustle among the withy wands is repeated again and again ; and now we know that the young otters have left their impregnable rocky bank, and are following their dam. She has reconnoitred, and all is safe. Paddling down stream come two objects, and, arriving at the pool, stop, tumble and frolic, rolling over and over and round and round, performing the most marvellous evolutions. They swing on a willow spray, and dash with lightning rapidity at a piece of floating bark—tumble with it, wrestle with it, and go through a hundred graceful movements ; then are motionless, then begin to play, and so continue for nearly an hour, when, as if suddenly alarmed, they rush down stream to their feeding-grounds. Fishing is continued through the darkness, until in the dewy meadow another sound comes up the wind, and the deep sonorous voice of an otter-hound breaks into the fairy-like dawn scene. . . .

When almost the whole of the insect world has folded its wings in sleep, there is a class of night-flyers whose hours of activity are those of darkness. Among the more interesting of these is the male Glow-worm—the English lantern-fly—whose light may be plainly seen as it flits past, pale and ghostly against the dark background of some deeply foliated bank or shadowy wood. Then there is the great army of night-flying moths, whose nocturnal wanderings present such a weird appearance in the darkness, and whose life-history contrasts so sharply with the sunny dalliance of their butterfly cousins. As moths have to contend with the night winds, their constitution is more robust than that of the *Rhoplocera*, or day-flyers. Their bodies are thicker, their wings narrower and more strongly nerved. As they settle on corrugated bark or grey stones to their deep diurnal sleep, their sober and inconspicuous colouring invariably

saves them even from detection. In many species this daily trance is so profound that a slumbering insect may be transfixed and never detect the occurrence until twilight again comes round. But if the closely folded upper wings are quiet and sober in colouring, this is only for protective reasons; for brilliant toilets are presented when twilight falls and affords its dewy veil. Under the closely folded wings of dusky grey are bright bodices of red, scarlet, crimson, and orange. What an admirable chapter would 'The Hues of the Night-flyers' afford by one who has fondly watched the fairy things through the dewy hours of a short summer night!

The twilight-flyers form a distinct class from the night-flyers, and have several well-marked characteristics. They are termed hawk-moths, and have long, sharp, scythe-like wings. The death's-head moth, the largest and most interesting of the British species, belongs to this group. It seldom comes abroad before darkness has fallen, and is always conspicuous in its nocturnal flight. Linnaeus, following his habitual system of picturesque nomenclature, placed this insect in the 'sphinx' family on account of the form of its magnificent caterpillar, and gave it the specific name of *Atropos*, in allusion to the popular superstition, Atropos being, according to Hesiod, the one of the Fates whose office it was to cut the thread of human life, spun by her sisters Clotho and Lachesis. Modern entomologists have preserved the idea of Linnaeus, giving to the new genus the name of *Acherontia*—pertaining to Acheron, one of the streams which, in the Greek mythology, have to be passed before entering the infernal regions. A low wailing sound which this insect emits has greatly added to the terror which its appearance inspires among ignorant rustics. The death's-head moth is a really splendid insect. Its stretched wings cover four and a half inches, and it is the largest of the British Lepidoptera. As is well known, it has its popular name from a marvellously good representation of a skull and crossbones upon the upper part of the thorax—a mark which has caused it to be an object of dread in every country which it inhabits. Fluttering at the window in the darkness, or entering the house by the open door just after the close of twilight, it is considered a certain omen of death. Like the hoarse croak of the raven and the 'boding' hoot of the owl, the appearance of the death's-head is said to be followed by disease and death. The power possessed by this insect of emitting a shrill creaking sound is



thought to be unique among British Lepidoptera; each time the sound is emitted the whole body gives a convulsive sort of start. The insect can be induced to utter this strange note by being irritated.

Another especially interesting night-flyer is the ghost-moth. Just as the twilight of a summer evening is deepening into darkness, and a soft warm wind stirs the foliage of the woods, the ghost-moth comes abroad. The observer sees a fitful apparition which suddenly vanishes into space. First a large insect with long wings is seen advancing; it comes straight on, then flutters in the air, and is gone. Whilst endeavouring to discover the mysterious retreat of the moth, it will suddenly reappear, and even whilst the eye closely follows its flight will again vanish. This effect is produced by the different colour of the wings on their upper and under sides—above they are snowy-white, and consequently visible even in the deep twilight; but on the lower side they, as well as the whole body, are of a deep dusky brown, so that when that side is suddenly turned towards the spectator it becomes invisible. As the male flies in the night, the white shining upper surface of the wings glitters luminously, almost appearing as if giving out their own light.

Standing in one of the rides of a woodland glade just as day is departing, one is pierced and thrilled by a perfect storm of song. This loud-swelling volume of song softens as the darkness deepens, and then only the polyglot wood-thrush is heard. The stem of the silver birch has ceased to vibrate to the blackbird's whistle, and as darkness comes a new set of sounds take possession of the night. But passing down through the meadows we have other thoughts than listening to these.

A silent river reach shaded by trees. Darkness has fallen, and the heavy dew stands on the grass. We know that the poachers have lately been busy knitting their nets, and have come to intercept them. The 'alder-dub' may be easily netted, and contains a score nice trout. Poachers carefully study the habits of fishes as well as those of game, both winged and furred. To the alder-dub they know the trout make when the river is low. The poachers have not noted signs of wind and weather and of local migrations for twenty years past to be ignorant of this. And so here, in the dew-beaded grass, we lie in wait. It is two o'clock, and a critical time. A strange breaking is in the east—grey, half light, half mist. If they come they will come now. In an hour the darkness will not hide them. We lie close to the



bank thickly covered with bush and scrub. Two sounds are heard and have been all night—the ceaseless call of the crake and the not less ceaseless song of the sedge-bird. A lapwing gets up in the darkness and screams—an ominous sound, and we are all ear. Three forms descend the opposite bank and on to the gravel bed. They empty the contents of a bag and begin to unroll its slow length. The breaking of a rotten twig in a preparatory movement for the dash sufficiently alarms them, and they rush into the wood as we into the water—content now to secure their cumbersome illegal net, and thus effectually stop their operations for three weeks at least. The grey becomes dawn and the dawn light as we wade wearily home through the long wet grass. Still the sedge-warbler sings.

Another night-singer is the blackcap. The lute-like mellowness and wild sweetness of its song give it a high place among British warblers—next only to the nightingale. The blackcap has neither the fulness nor the force, but it has all and more than the former's purity. This little hideling, with its timid obtrusiveness, never strays far from cultivation. One provision it requires, and that is seclusion. Its shy and retiring habits teach it to search out dense retreats, and it is rarely seen. If observed on the confines of its corral of boughs, it immediately begins to perform a series of evolutions, until it has placed a dense screen between itself and the observer.

Many times have we heard the round, full, lute-like plaintiveness of the nightingale—sounds that seem to seize and ingrain themselves in the very soul, that 'make the wild blood start in its mystic springs.' To us the delicious triumph of the bird's song is in its utter *abandon*, the lute-like sweetness, the silvery liquidness, the bubbling and running over, and the wild gurgling 'jug, jug, jug!' To say this, and more—that the nightingale is a mad sweet polyglot, that it is the sweetest of English warblers, the essence and quintessence of song, that it is the whole wild-bird achievement in one—these are feeble, feeble! This 'light-winged dryad of the trees' is still 'in some melodious spot of beechen green and shadows numberless, singing of summer in full-throated ease'—and here she will remain. Unlike the songs of some of our warblers, hers can never be reproduced. Attempt to translate it, and it eludes you; only its meagre skeleton remains. Isaac Walton, in his quaint eloquence, tries to say what he felt. 'The nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that

it might make mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight . . . should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet decants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and re-doubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth?"

Although Britain can show no parallel, either in number or brilliance, to the living lights of the tropics, we are not without several interesting phosphorescent creatures of our own. Those whose business leads them abroad in the fields and woods through the short summer nights are often treated to quite remarkable luminous sights. Last night the writer was lying on a towering limestone escarpment, waiting to intercept a gang of poachers. The darkness was dead and unrelieved, and a warm rain studded every grass-blade with moisture. When the day and sun broke, this would glow with a million brilliant prismatic colours, then suddenly vanish. But the illumination came sooner and in a different way. The rain ceased, and hundreds of tiny living lights lit up the sward. In the intense darkness these shone with an unusual brilliancy, and lit up the almost impalpable moisture. Every foot of ground was studded with its star-like gem, and these twinkled and shone as the fire-flies stirred in the grass. The sight was quite an un-English one, and the soft green glow only paled at the coming of day. One phase of this interesting phenomenon is that now we can have a reproduction of it nightly. The fire-flies were collected, turned down on the lawn, and their hundred luminous lamps now shed a soft lustre over all the green.

Why our British fire-flies are designated 'glow-worms' is difficult to understand. *Lampyrus noctiluca* has nothing worm-like about it. It is a true insect. The popular misconception has probably risen in this wise. The female glow-worm, the light-giver, is wingless; the male is winged. The latter, however, has but little of the light-emitting power possessed by the female. Only the light-givers are collected, and being destitute of the first attribute of an insect, wings, are set down in popular parlance as worms. Old mossy banks, damp hedgerows, and shaded woods are the loved haunts of the fire-flies, and the warm nights of the soft summer months most induce them to burn their soft lustre. Some widowed worm or fire-fly may shed her luminous self on the darkness even on into dying summer or autumn. But this is unusual. It is not definitely known what purpose is served by the emission of the soft green light, but it has long been suspected

that the lustre was to attract the male, and this seems reasonable. Gilbert White found that glowworms were attracted by the light of candles, and many of them came into his parlour. Another naturalist by the same process captured as many as forty male glowworms in an evening. Still another suggestion is that the phosphorescence serves as a protection or means of defence to the creatures possessing it, and an incident which seems to support this view has been actually witnessed. This was in the case of a carabus which was observed running round and round a phosphorescent centipede, evidently wishing but not daring to attack it. A third explanation of the phenomenon is that it serves to afford light for the creature to see by. A somewhat curious confirmation of this is the fact that in the insect genus to which our British fireflies belong, the *Lampyris*, the degree of luminosity is exactly in inverse proportion to the development of vision. Fireflies glow with greatest brilliancy at midnight. Their luminosity is first seen soon after dark :—

The glowworm shows the matin to be near,  
And 'gins to pale his ineffectual fire.

As the insects rest on the grass and moss, the difference in the amount of light emitted is most marked. While the luminous spot indicated by a female is quite bright, the males show only as the palest fire. When on the wing the light of the latter is not seen at all. Heavy rain, so long as it is warm, serves only to increase the brightness. The seat of light in the glowworm is in the tail, and proceeds from three luminous sacs in the last segment of the abdomen. The male has only two of these, and the light proceeding from them is comparatively small. During favourable weather the light glows steadily, but at other times is not constant. The fireflies of the tropics—those composing the genus *Lampyris*—vary to the extent that while certain species control their light, others are without this power. The light of our English glowworm is undoubtedly under its control, as upon handling the insect it is immediately put out. It would seem to take some little muscular effort to produce the luminosity, as one was observed to move continually the last segment of the body as long as it continued to shine. The larva of the glowworm is capable of emitting light, but not to be compared to that of the developed insect. Both in its mature and immature forms *Lampyris noctiluca* plays a useful part in the economy of nature. To the agriculturist and fruit-grower it is a special friend. Its

diet consists almost wholly of small-shelled snails, and it comes upon the scene just when these farm and garden pests are most troublesome. British fireflies probably never yet figured as personal ornaments to female beauty. This is, and has always been, one of their uses to the dusky daughters of the tropics. They are often studded in the coiled and braided hair, and perform somewhat the same office as the diamond for more civilised belles. Spanish ladies and those of the West Indies enclose fireflies in bags of lace or gauze, and wear them amid their hair, or disposed about their persons. The luminosity of our modest English insect is far outshone by several of its congeners. Some of these are used in various ways for illumination, and it is said that the brilliancy of the light is such that the smallest print can be read by that proceeding from the thoracic spots alone, when a single insect is moved along the lines. In the Spanish settlements fireflies are frequently used in a curious way when travelling at night. The natives tie an insect to each great toe, and on fishing and hunting expeditions make torches of them by fastening several together. The same people have a summer festival at which the garments of the young people are covered with fireflies, and being mounted on fine horses similarly ornamented, the latter gallop through the dusk, the whole producing the effect of a large moving light.

Another phosphorescent little creature found commonly in Britain is a centipede with the expressive name *Geophilus electricus*. This is a tiny living light which shows its luminous qualities in a remarkable and interesting fashion. It may not uncommonly be seen on field and garden paths, and leaves a lovely train of phosphorescent fire as it goes. This silvery train glows in the track of the insect, sometimes extending to 20 inches in length. In addition to this its phosphorescence is exhibited by a row of luminous spots on each side of its body, and these points of pale fire present quite a pretty sight when seen under favourable circumstances. It was stated that the light-giving qualities of the fireflies might be designed to serve them to see by; but this fails to apply to the little creature under notice, as it is without eyes.

There are still other British insects which have the repute of being phosphorescent, though the evidence is not yet quite satisfactory. Among them are the male cricket and 'daddy-long-legs,' both of which are reported to have been seen in a phosphorescent condition.

## MORE CIRCUIT NOTES.

*Aylesbury* : November 19.—A court like a Georgian chapel, pillared and galleried in black oak, with an ancient weary clock that has ticked through many a famous trial and many a famous speech, forensic and political. Here was tried Quaker Tawell, who poisoned a woman at Slough, and earned for his advocate the sobriquet of Applepip Kelly, the advocate making the hopeless effort to explain the presence of prussic acid by the evidence of a large number of apples and their pips eaten by the deceased; Tawell, the first criminal captured by the electric telegraph, and properly and duly hanged. That is the court-house window, with a high light like an artist's in Charlotte Street, out of which he stepped to die, dropping (as I am informed) into a tea-chest below. You see in these quiet country places, where executions are scarce, one must do the best one can and is sometimes driven to shifts. And here Disraeli delivered himself of many a gay prophetic utterance in the days when *Punch* drew him in a smock-frook or cheap-jack's dress, playing protection and other tricks with the open-mouthed electors of Bucks.

Now in the crowded court, white faces against the black oak and the polished steel halberts of the police glinting in the gas, stands a young architect in the dock, educated above his capacity or the chances of honestly exercising it, into crime, and charged with sending a threatening letter to his aunt. A very bad, fluent, dangerous type, easily to become a Casanova; and immediately, much to his furious surprise, to receive a sentence of six years' penal servitude. His lips move, he grows dead white and quivers; then, turning to the gallery, shakes his fist and yells 'I'll be revenged on you when I'm out,' and is hurried below amidst what newspaper reporters call a sensation. Poor old lady, his aunt; imagine her terrified calculation of the expiry of the boy's sentence, her horrors as the winter evenings draw in and faces are fancied at the window in November mirk, her shudders as the garden-gate slams and steps come up the path. Family quarrels, family vengeance, depend upon it the young villain will know best how to terrify and harm her; why, what

are our relatives for if it be not to know very well all that we like and all that we particularly hate?

Poachers follow, tattered hawthornbuds, old soldiers in trouble many a time before for desertion and assault and trespass, and now caught with nets and bludgeons and stones (which they swear were apples), by the three velvetens who give cheerful evidence, and display the guns and caps taken, with a satisfaction they don't attempt to disguise. The father of one of the prisoners with the most scrupulous stupidity proves an alibi on the wrong day, and they are all convicted. That is the explanation of most of these alibis that seem so conclusive; they are the incidents of the wrong day, only you can't always make it clear to the jury; so alibis are mostly successful. Hence Mr. Weller's wail for the use of one by Samivel; he had often, no doubt, heard their efficacy discussed at assize time by attorneys in the bar.

*Bedford: November 21.*—I just went down below the court to look at the cells, and finding one of them locked, asked who was inside. In reply the jailor opened the door, and in the dingy grey light I recognised an old man, Salvation Army, who had that morning been sentenced to eight years' penal servitude for a very gross crime; and now, with his head on his hands, spectacles pushed up and cap on the back of his rough grey hair, was quietly eating bread and meat. 'What have you got there?' I asked him. 'Eight years,' he replied, with his mouth full. 'No, no; what are you eating?' 'Oh, bread and meat.' 'Good?' 'Very good.' 'You were sentenced this morning.' 'Aye.' 'Are you sorry?' 'Nowhere to go, no home,' the old man said, pushing down his spectacles to look at me, and then picking at the brown bread while he talked, much as an old woman knits. 'Only got a sister, she's got enough to do to look after herself, don't want me; no wife, no child, may as well be in prison. I'm sixty-four years of age.' 'You don't mean to give any trouble, eh? You're going to behave yourself?' 'Look here,' said he, laying a couple of knubbly fingers on my arm, I was sitting beside him, 'I'm one of the quietest old men ever stepped, don't give nobody any trouble. Ask the police at Bastow, they'll tell you I'm one of the quietest you ever saw in your life; always was and always mean to be.' A kindly light gleamed over his goatish old face, while the policeman laughed and nodded his head. 'You're all right,' he said.

We were talking last night of juries, and as to how often their verdicts are wrong. Everyone knows they often acquit wrongfully; no one could give of his own experience an instance of a wrongful conviction. One of our party who had been present at the trial, in York Castle in 1861, gave a curious example of that indefinite something, instinct or whatever it may be, on which (in default of actual evidence) juries often act, and which as often seems to lead them right as wrong. A man was being tried for a Trades Union outrage; he was charged with having thrown a bomb into a house where a workman lived who had refused to join them; he had mistaken the house, thrown the bomb into a bedroom where an old woman was asleep, the bomb had exploded and killed her. The evidence against the prisoner was not conclusive, but seemed tolerably strong. A girl living opposite had heard the crash, had looked out and seen a man she believed to be the prisoner running away; would not swear positively, but to the best of her belief that was the man. Another witness swore to him more positively; for, running away along the side of the wall, his coat had caught in a hook outside a butcher's shop, this happening in a low quarter of Sheffield, and turning to disengage it the moon fell full on his face, and that was the man, she was sure, the man in the dock. Moreover, in his lodgings was found a coat, admittedly the prisoner's, with just such a tear. Notwithstanding, the jury acquitted him, and with a shout he threw his cap up to the gallery and was carried off in a carriage and pair by his rejoicing Trades Union brethren. Now, in 1864 these outrages were examined into by a committee sitting at Sheffield, and an indemnity was given to anyone giving evidence before them; when not only was it proved that the prisoner of 1861 had not thrown the bomb, by the man coming forward who had, but it was also clear that the witnesses at his trial were right; he had been in the street at the time, and hearing the explosion and running away, just as anyone else might have done, had been seen, and had torn his coat exactly in the manner described. The jury were right, though there wasn't probably another soul in court except themselves and the prisoner who thought them so.

One hears a good many tales on circuit and can't tell how many of them are known outside the profession, or are worth reproducing. Here's an instance. A prisoner was being tried for his life in the days when horse-stealing was a capital offence;



the evidence was all against him and he had no defence but an alibi ; swore it was a case of mistaken identity, that he was a sailor and was away in the West Indies on some cutting-out expedition at the time when the affair happened ; thousands of miles away and knew nothing whatever about it. Just before the vital, or lethal, moment of sentence, prisoner catches sight of a bluff sailor-like gentleman dozing in the magistrates' seats. 'Lieutenant Maintop, ahoy,' he shouts, 'the man who can prove my innocence.' Sailor-like man wakes with a start, rubs his eyes, is requested by the judge to recognise the prisoner, who excitedly calls to him that he is Jack Bowline of H.M.S. 'Thunder,' one of the boat's crew who cut out the French frigates in Porto Rico bay. Sailor-like man, flustered at being so suddenly woke and finding all eyes fixed on him, declares in his hearty honest fashion that though there certainly was a Jack Bowline in his watch, and one of the aforesaid crew, he does not recognise him in the prisoner. Increasing, overpowering excitement of the prisoner, who like all men 'will give all that he hath for his life'; sailor-like distress of the lieutenant, torn between the determination to say nothing but the absolute truth and the desire to save a fellow creature's life. At last, says he, 'if the man *is* Bowline he will be easily identified by a cut on the back of his head from a French cutlass which he got under my very nose in that very expedition, and fell back into my arms.' Prisoner's head examined, just such a cut ; triumphant acquittal ; Bowline and the lieutenant leave the town together in a chaise and pair ; cheers and subscription of thirty guineas for the poor ill-used sailor prisoner. Three months later they were both hanged for highway robbery, prisoner and witness. Lieutenant Maintop and Jack Bowline were old accomplices in crime, the alibi and business of recognition was a well-arranged plant. *Vivent les gueux !*

*Northampton : November 26.*—It is half-past eight at night and we have been sitting since nine this morning. How sombre and dramatic justice seems at such an hour ; the moisture running down the black windows, a hard frost outside, candles guttering on the bench, yellow gas ponderously hanging from the heavy stuccoed Jacobean ceiling, and, lurking everywhere in the dark and crowded court, vengeful shadows, as though shapes demanding sentence on the wretched men in the dock. The governor of the gaol grasps the spikes and begs and prays for mercy ; he seems, poor creature, absolutely to writhe with terror and apprehension ; the herbalist, with his bad Japanese head, sticks his

hands in his hideous astrakan market-place-lecturer's coat, and assumes an aspect of vicious defiance. Provincial vice, is there anything in the world so loathly? Why is it people, even men so sensible as poets, are always chanting country virtue and city vice. In my experience, not altogether small, crime is infinitely worse at an ordinary assize than at the Old Bailey. And as for your *Rosière* or reputable Queen of the May, I will engage to get you one a good deal sounder in the Tottenham Court Road or Westbourne Grove than in any of these midland villages or towns.

The governor and herbalist get ten years' penal servitude each, and the court filters away. When I return in a few minutes to get a book I left, I hear them in the emptiness from outside yelling the evening papers. A court attendant is picking up pieces of paper and another putting the chairs straight on the bench. Below the dock, crushed and vacant, still sits the prisoner's son. I saw him when his father was being sentenced sitting so, his hand covering his face. Now he stares straight in front of him. The shadows seem to be closing in upon him where he sits under the solitary gas. Presently one of the attendants will touch him on the shoulder and tell him he is going to lock up the courts, and he will stagger out into the bitter cold of the world with a frozen heart.

It is often strange, as one saunters among the shops in these circuit towns, to come upon the witnesses, or even the prisoner just acquitted, as often one does, going about their ordinary business, buying note-paper or sausage rolls, just as we all have to do, however much of tragedy there may be in our lives. Here's a man coming towards me across the market-place eating something out of a paper bag, whom I left just now in the dock being tried for his life; it was a question whether he shot his sweetheart or she shot herself, and the jury have given him the benefit of the doubt. Here's a stout puce-faced man considering with his pretty daughter whether he'll buy a tin of salmon outside the grocer's, who were both of them just now the chief witnesses in a trial that will be one of the traditions of the country-side. Here's the doctor getting quietly into his gig, who just this moment was piecing the fragments of a broken skull on the ledge of the witness-box and tracing the course of the bullet for us; and a mother taking her daughter to the station who but for some mysterious good fortune might have had penal servi-

tude for life for killing her child. And so, whether one knows it or not, everywhere and every day we are rubbing shoulders in the streets and theatres with tragedy; as I in Kensington Gardens often meet a strolling vague old lady who drank of all the horrors of the Indian mutiny; hid for months, disguised as a native, in groves and ruined temples, and now goes to the Stores and afternoon performances just as any other old Bayswater dame whose greatest trouble has been a burst water-pipe, or an infectious sickness at the seaside.

*Leicester, Nov. 29.—Tête de visionnaire*, a sort of minor prophet, a Leicestershire Habakkuk, mumbling and moaning; with his shock colourless hair and beard, his great hooked white nose and thin cheeks; farmer, used to lie in bed all day, imagining himself dying, roused himself late one evening to get the gun out of the parlour and shoot at his brother-in-law saying good-night in the dining-room; brother-in-law, all plastered and starred about the head and neck, says there had been no quarrel; Habakkuk plainly mad. It appears he believed himself to have heart disease, due to lifting a sack three years ago, since when he has been mainly in bed, eating and drinking, moaning and dozing. The little servant of the farm tells us he always kept his hand over his heart, had worn quite a place there in his clothes, rubbed off all the buttons of his coats and waistcoats; was always complaining of himself and life, and very rightly. There are more of such lives being lived than one would imagine; poor creatures drifting into madness between the sheets. I knew an old lady who for years turned absolutely night into day; breakfasted at half-past eight in the evening, dined at one, tea at five and supper at seven in the morning; then to bed again. The servants were told of it when they were engaged, and seem rather to have enjoyed it. They got into the habit of sleeping between mealtimes and had the whole day to themselves. The old lady used to write her letters, read a good deal and walk out about the grounds, moon or not.

As for Habakkuk the jury find him mad and he stumbles moaning below, shortly to become violent and encased in a strait-waistcoat.

A village quarrel next; gossip Tib charges gossip Joan with breaking and entering and stealing a ham, one of two but recently cured. She produces the fellow to it, and the jury are called upon to compare it with the remains found in the prisoner

Joan's cottage. They turn it this way and that and pronounce unanimously that the two do not belong to the same pig. Discomfiture of Tib, who wraps the ham in her apron, rubs her nose and leaves the court talking virulently to herself.

*The Castle*, Nov. 30.—The grey court, with its fragments of ancient Norman work peering in, waits the judge. A far flourish of trumpets, another nearer—*The King drinks to Hamlet!*—the judge enters, bows; crime shuffles up to be tried and sentenced. First, the farm-girl, with swollen crying face, who shamefully hid her child. While she mops her poor shapeless cheeks, the judge with a few kindly sentences hands her over to her father to look after; she is to come up for judgment when called upon. And next a City Miss who did much the same, and looks as though it were not the first time she had been in such a position. Was lodging quietly in a respectable house when a watch was missed; box in her room searched for it, body of a child found there, might have been dead some weeks; truly, from that box the death-watch might have been heard and directed their search. She gets three months and appears to have expected more.

And now tragedy, veritable tragedy, as I understand it. The prisoner, a young surgeon, bends his head over the edge of the dock while the counsel for the prosecution, emotionless and even, reads the letters and unfolds the melancholy, nay, terrible story. How flat and bald the *darling sweetheart, faithful lover, I worship you, I adore you, with all my love for ever and ever*, sound in that horsehair voice. The prisoner listens as though he had never heard them before; I can see (shall I ever forget?) his young face, his dusty hair, his pincenez, his chestnut moustache, drawn cheeks and unshaven chin. You may see such young fellows at the seaside with the girls they are engaged to marry; they are going to wait a little, to get an appointment, to buy a practice, then to marry and live happy ever after. They come of what are called 'nice people,' of the best middle-class and suburban types. You may see them in the dress circle at the Haymarket and merry at the German Reed's, and laughing in the underground after afternoon performances; they read and think a little for themselves and throng the Academy in June; if tragedy lurk anywhere you do not think of it with them, nor ever conceive them as now the young fellow sits in that stained dock, desperately fighting for his liberty.

It is the young Lord Hamlet who hath betrayed the fair

Ophelia, in the country rectory, amid all the pleasant throng of tennis parties and village concerts and cheerful neighbourly at-homes ; there being no shrewd Polonius to warn her tender inexperience—she was only eighteen—

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows ;

nothing but the light of her great and constant love, poor soul, to lead her wrong. *O Rose of May!* the fair Ophelia goes mad ; acute mania, the doctor tells me ; and Laertes brooding in the lonely rectory, all dark now to her happy laughter and bright face, lights on all the horrors of the story among the letters in her desk, and the young Lord Hamlet is arrested. What he must be suffering as he sits there, I dare not think ; from ten in the morning till six at night, he sits with folded arms watching his liberty beaten like a shuttlecock back from counsel to counsel, now high, now low. How sublime the mercy it seems to me, that has clouded the poor Ophelia's wits that she knows nothing of it ; she thinks herself happy, I am told, away in the asylum, runs to the window and claps her hands, believes her lover with her ; her mind has grown bird-like, leaping and twittering ; how will they keep from her, when she grows sane, the tragedy of its interval ?

I stand in her father's church, against the organ which she always played on Sunday ; for, moved to profound pity, I paid a melancholy pilgrimage to rectory and village, of which I seem to know so much from reading so many of her letters to her lover. It is a day of black and bitter frost, and I have walked four miles from the station across a silent country to a silent village. The blacksmith has the key of the church and lets me in. She was a fine singer, he says, and always had a kind word for everyone. He wonders who I am who want to see so unpretentious a place of worship, and ask so many questions about Miss May. The house-door of the rectory opens on to the churchyard ; yes, that's Miss May's dog. I was sure it was, he comes to me when I call his name. That is her room, with the blinds half down and the bulrushes showing in the corner. I recognise the lime tree outside, in which she tells her lover of the nightingale that sang on the topmost boughs on the night of her new-found happiness, when they were first engaged. The bird was singing to her only, she was sure, and so she would not wake her little sister to listen. Never was a brighter, better nature wrecked

upon the shoals of passion; in all the letters I read, extending over many months, breathing so devoted and unselfish a love, there was not one word in them one would not have wished one's sister to write; not one word of pretence or affectation, but the beating of a great heart through them all, beating like a bird against the meshes of a net. And most pitiful of all, when insanity begins and the poor writing begins to get hurried and shapeless, when she breaks into incoherent passages of Scripture and speaks of her mother who died when she was a child—'there is the door banging again,' she writes, 'they never think of poor mother's head;' and describes her, pale and worn, as she sees her, dead so many years, working at a sewing-machine. She cannot sleep and she gets up early to write a novel—'The Farewell of Love.' Her hands are so hot, she must take off her rings and wash them again. The wind is crying round the angle of the house; it cried so when she lay here ill, and induced her greatly to self-pity. 'Come to me, Jack,' she moans; 'the last time I saw you, the firelight was shining on your glasses and something snapped at my heart when you looked back at me from the door;' and 'come to me,' she moans, when they take her to the sea to try what that will do, 'come to me and I will show you my mother's grave; I have not been there since I was a little one in black.'

The young surgeon is acquitted, after an obstinate fight among the jury. He steps out of the dock a free man, gaunt and haggard, so marked with that long agony that by those marks alone I should know him. He is only four-and-twenty, and as yet not altogether corrupt. His youth, as with other diseases, is in his favour.

A word in thine ear, Lord Hamlet. If, when the fair Ophelia grows sane again, ceases the singing of her pitiful little songs, thou art not at her side, thy whole life hers, thine only endeavour to make her forget the sorrowful past, thou shouldst be cast headlong from the platform of Elsinore, the prey of every obscene bird that cares for carrion. Look to it.

*Warwick: December 16.*—Murder, quiet and inoffensive, in a white slop; killed an old woman with a coal hammer, because she was always 'hagging' him, and charged him finally with stealing a pair of her stockings. He's sixty-three, scavenger, employed by the corporation of Birmingham, and is described by all the witnesses as a peaceable hard-working old soul, except when he's

got the beer in him, and then he's nasty. It is murder reduced to its simplest elements, and there's no way out but death. He stands up to receive sentence and I see no sign of fear in him except just one catch of the breath; the white slop just heaves once and with all submission he walks below. He will have three weeks in which to prepare for the great change, and with a firm step he will walk to the scaffold. These men always die with great fortitude, or insensibility, whichever it may be. The fact is I think they are dead, have died, long before they came into the hands of the executioner.

In the old days condemned men were generally hanged the day after sentence. They used to pray for a 'long day,' which meant eight-and-forty hours; it was the most they got. Captain John Donellan, who was sentenced in this very court for the poisoning of his brother-in-law, Sir Theodosius Boughton, with laurel water in 1781, was condemned late on a Friday night and hanged on the Monday. No doubt his position secured him the respite, that and Sunday intervening. A flashy scoundrel, I imagine, for he was known as Diamond Donellan.

It is a relief to get a couple of 'smashers' in the dock, male and female makers and issuers of false coin. The detective, who is quite young and looks like the most youthful of the clerks in the Bank of England, displays all their paraphernalia just as he swooped down on them; mould in the oven with a florin baking in it, files, battery, bottles of nitric and sulphuric acid, and ground glass that is mixed with the pewter to give the coins a proper metallic ring. A very unfortunate moment for the police to pay a morning call, just as the male smasher was spooning the metal into a mould and the female polishing up the edges of a duffing shilling with a file. Asked for an explanation, the prisoner declares they are all the property of one Crowley, whom only that morning he had discovered to be 'a crooked man'; had, in consequence, ordered out of his place, but who had begged just to be allowed to remain till night, till he could find another home for his nefarious trade. In the meantime, Crowley out looking for another place, enter the police, and the prisoner, most innocent and unfortunate of men, is apprehended. On looking over his record I find he's been a smasher for years, is only just out of penal servitude for it, into which he returns for another five years. The woman is mercifully acquitted and resumes her business of selling paper flags. The cruelty of the smasher lies in



his passing the coin among the poor ; he goes and buys a bottle of gingerbeer for a penny and leaves the unhappy widow to do the best she can with the base shilling with which he pays for it.

One sees glimpses of droll interiors in these circuit trials, at which one doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. That determined-looking woman of five-and-forty is a charwoman who tried to poison her mistress, the wife of a doctor at Leamington. It sounds tragic enough, but there's a good deal of comedy mingled with it. The doctor looks like the white knight in 'Alice in Wonderland,' and begins by informing the Court that his views of the oath are precisely similar to those of Mr. Matthew Arnold, and that he is equally ready to swear or to affirm. When the corrosive sublimate is produced he asks for the bottle, puts it in his coat-tail pocket and acts (in a manner to kill you laughing) the whole scene in which he suddenly charged the woman with the crime. It appears she made up her mind that when her mistress was out of the way her position in the household would be improved. She gave it her first in tea, too much, so she was only violently sick ; then, perhaps doubtful of its properties, notwithstanding the label, tried it on a favourite white rat whose happiness it was to breakfast with her mistress in bed, and, the rat dying at once, tried it again in brandy and water. 'Oh, dear!' says the lady, 'that tastes like the tea.' Furthermore, like all embyro poisoners, she goes about saying her mistress is on the point of death, and tells the milkman she has heard death-tokens, steps about the house which cannot be traced to anyone. She gets fifteen years' penal servitude and starts back as if you had slapped her face. The man who shaves me tells me the sentence is considered very severe, but can give no other reason than that public opinion does not think very highly of the doctor's household. The truth is they are as strange a trio, father, mother, and son, as ever were seen, with their odd clothes and odd manners ; but that is no reason why any one of them should be removed by poison.

I asked the governor of the gaol afterwards if the woman had spoken, had in any way confessed her guilt and the justice of her sentence. Sometimes prisoners confess and show their contrition strangely enough. I knew a man in the service who was shot by one of the men in his company. The murderer had a grudge against the sergeant and meant to kill him, but the sergeant not appearing that morning at the butts, the man shot the superior

officer, having no sort of grudge against him. Just before he was executed he wrote to the father of my poor friend to ask his forgiveness, said that he knew that nothing he could say or do could atone for such a crime, but that if he would only accept from him a white bull-terrier pup that had always been to him his dearest possession, he should at least die tolerably happy.

Again, how odd a confession sometimes escapes them, a *cri du cœur* that a few moments earlier would have effectually knotted the rope! Prisoner was being tried for murder: evidence against him purely circumstantial; part of it, a hat found near the scene of the crime; an ordinary round black hat, but sworn to as the prisoner's. Counsel for the defence, of course, made much of the commonness of the hat. 'You, gentlemen, no doubt each of you possess such a hat, of the most ordinary make and shape. Beware how you condemn a fellow creature to a shameful death on such a piece of evidence,'—and so on. So the man was acquitted. Just as he was leaving the dock, with the most touching humility and simplicity he pulled his hair and said, 'If you please, my lord, may I 'ave my 'at?'

## *A SET OF CHESSMEN.*

### I.

‘BUT, Monsieur, perceive how magnificent they are! There is not in Finistère, there is not in Brittany, nay, it is certain there is not in France so superb a set of chessmen. And ivory! And the carving—observe, for example, the variety of detail.’

They certainly were a curious set of chessmen, magnificent in a way, but curious first of all. As M. Bobineau remarked, holding a rook in one hand and a knight in the other, the care paid to details by the carver really was surprising. But two hundred and fifty francs! For a set of chessmen!

‘So, so, my friend. I am willing to admit that the work is good—in a kind of a way. But two hundred and fifty francs! If it were fifty, now?’

‘Fifty!’ Up went M. Bobineau’s shoulders, and down went M. Bobineau’s head between them, in the fashion of those toys which are pulled by a string. ‘Ah, mon Dieu! Monsieur laughs at me!’

And there came another voluble declaration of their merits. They certainly were a curious set. I really think they were the most curious set I ever saw. I would have preferred them, for instance, to anything they have at South Kensington, and they have some remarkable examples there. And, of course, the price was small—I even admit it was ridiculously small. But when one has only five thousand francs a year for everything, two hundred and fifty being taken away—and for a set of chessmen—do leave a vacancy behind.

I asked Bobineau where he got them. Business was slack that sunny afternoon—it seemed to me that I was the only customer he ever had, but that must have been a delusion on my part. Report said he was a warm man, one of Morlaix’s warmest men, and his queer old shop in the queer old Grande Rue—Grande Rue! what a name for an alley!—contained many things which were valuable as well as queer. But there, at least, was no other customer in sight just then, so Bobineau told me all the tale.

It seemed there had been a M. Funichon—Auguste Funichon—no, not a Breton, a Parisian, a true Parisian, who had come and settled down in the commune of Plouigneau, over by the *gare*. This M. Funichon was, for example, a little—well, a little—a little *exalted*, let us say. It is true that the country people said he was stark mad, but Bobineau, for his part, said no, no, no! It is not necessary, because one is a little eccentric, that one is mad. Here Bobineau looked at me out of the corner of his eye. Are not the English, of all people, the most eccentric, and yet is it not known to all the world that they are not, necessarily, stark mad? This M. Funichon was not rich, quite the contrary. It was a little place he lived in—the merest cottage, in fact. And in it he lived alone, and, according to report, there was only one thing he did all day and all night long, and that was, play chess. It appears that he was that rarest and most amiable of imbeciles, a chess-maniac. Is there such a word?

‘What a life!’ said M. Bobineau. ‘Figure it to yourself! To do nothing—nothing!—but play chess! They say’—M. Bobineau looked round him with an air of mystery—‘they say he starved himself to death. He was so besotted by his miserable chess that he forgot—absolutely forgot, this imbecile—to eat.’

That was what M. Bobineau said they said. It required a vigorous effort of the imagination to quite take it in. To what a state of forgetfulness must a man arrive before he forgets to eat! But whether M. Funichon forgot to eat, or whether he didn’t, at least he died, and being dead they sold his goods—why they sold them was not quite clear, but at the sale M. Bobineau was the chief purchaser. One of the chief lots was the set of ivory chessmen which had caught my eyes. They were the dead man’s favourite set, and no wonder! Bobineau was of opinion that if he had had his way he would have had them buried with him in his grave.

‘It is said,’ he whispered, again with the glance of mystery around, ‘that they found him dead, seated at the table, the chessmen on the board, his hand on the white rook, which was giving mate to the adversary’s king.’

Either what a vivid imagination had Bobineau, or what odd things the people said! One pictures the old man, seated all alone, with his last breath finishing his game.

Well, I bought the set of ivory chessmen. At this time of day I freely admit that they were cheap at two hundred and fifty

frances—dirt cheap, indeed; but a hundred was all I paid. I knew Bobineau so well—I dare say he bought them for twenty-five. As I bore them triumphantly away my mind was occupied by thoughts of their original possessor. I was filled by quite a sentimental tenderness as I meditated on the part they had played, according to Bobineau, in that last scene. But St. Servan drove all those thoughts away. Philippe Henri de St. Servan was rather a difficult person to get on with. It was with him I shared at that time my apartment on the *place*.

‘Let us see!’ I remarked when I got in, ‘what have I here?’

He was seated, his country pipe in his mouth, at the open window, looking down upon the river. The Havre boat was making ready to start—at Morlaix the nautical event of the week. There was quite a bustle on the quay. St. Servan just looked round, and then looked back again. I sat down and untied my purchase.

‘I think there have been criticisms—derogatory criticisms—passed by a certain person upon a certain set of chessmen. Perhaps that person will explain what he has to say to these.’

St. Servan marched up to the table. He looked at them through his half-closed eyelids.

‘Toys!’ was all he said.

‘Perhaps! Yet toys which made a tragedy. Have you ever heard of the name of Funichon?’ By a slight movement of his grisly grey eyebrows he intimated that it was possible he had. ‘These chessmen belonged to him. He had just finished a game with them when they found him dead—the winning piece, a white rook, was in his hand. Suggest an epitaph to be placed over his grave. There’s a picture for a painter—eh?’

‘Bah! He was a Communist!’

That was all St. Servan said. And so saying, St. Servan turned away to look out of the window at the Havre boat again. There was an end of M. Funichon for him. Not that he meant exactly what he said. He simply meant that M. Funichon was not Legitimist—out of sympathy with the gentlemen who met, and decayed, visibly, before the naked eye, at the club on the other side of the *place*. With St. Servan not to be Legitimist meant to be nothing at all—out of his range of vision absolutely. Seeing that was so, it is strange he should have borne with me as he did. But he was a wonderful old man.

officer, having no sort of grudge against him. Just before he was executed he wrote to the father of my poor friend to ask his forgiveness, said that he knew that nothing he could say or do could atone for such a crime, but that if he would only accept from him a white bull-terrier pup that had always been to him his dearest possession, he should at least die tolerably happy.

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### I.

'BUT, Monsieur, perceive how magnificent they are! There is not in Finistère, there is not in Brittany, nay, it is certain there is not in France so superb a set of chessmen. And ivory! And the carving—observe, for example, the variety of detail.'

They certainly were a curious set of chessmen, magnificent in a way, but curious first of all. As M. Bobineau remarked, holding a rook in one hand and a knight in the other, the care paid to details by the carver really was surprising. But two hundred and fifty francs! For a set of chessmen!

'So, so, my friend. I am willing to admit that the work is good—in a kind of a way. But two hundred and fifty francs! If it were fifty, now?'

'Fifty!' Up went M. Bobineau's shoulders, and down went M. Bobineau's head between them, in the fashion of those toys which are pulled by a string. 'Ah, mon Dieu! Monsieur laughs at me!'

And there came another voluble declaration of their merits. They certainly were a curious set. I really think they were the most curious set I ever saw. I would have preferred them, for instance, to anything they have at South Kensington, and they have some remarkable examples there. And, of course, the price was small—I even admit it was ridiculously small. But when one has only five thousand francs a year for everything, two hundred and fifty being taken away—and for a set of chessmen—do leave a vacancy behind.

I asked Bobineau where he got them. Business was slack that sunny afternoon—it seemed to me that I was the only customer he ever had, but that must have been a delusion on my part. Report said he was a warm man, one of Morlaix's warmest men, and his queer old shop in the queer old Grande Rue—Grande Rue! what a name for an alley!—contained many things which were valuable as well as queer. But there, at least, was no other customer in sight just then, so Bobineau told me all the tale.



It seemed there had been a M. Funichon—Auguste Funichon—no, not a Breton, a Parisian, a true Parisian, who had come and settled down in the commune of Plouigneau, over by the *gare*. This M. Funichon was, for example, a little—well, a little—a little *exalted*, let us say. It is true that the country people said he was stark mad, but Bobineau, for his part, said no, no, no! It is not necessary, because one is a little eccentric, that one is mad. Here Bobineau looked at me out of the corner of his eye. Are not the English, of all people, the most eccentric, and yet is it not known to all the world that they are not, necessarily, stark mad? This M. Funichon was not rich, quite the contrary. It was a little place he lived in—the merest cottage, in fact. And in it he lived alone, and, according to report, there was only one thing he did all day and all night long, and that was, play chess. It appears that he was that rarest and most amiable of imbeciles, a chess-maniac. Is there such a word?

‘What a life!’ said M. Bobineau. ‘Figure it to yourself! To do nothing—nothing!—but play chess! They say’—M. Bobineau looked round him with an air of mystery—‘they say he starved himself to death. He was so besotted by his miserable chess that he forgot—absolutely forgot, this imbecile—to eat.’

That was what M. Bobineau said they said. It required a vigorous effort of the imagination to quite take it in. To what a state of forgetfulness must a man arrive before he forgets to eat! But whether M. Funichon forgot to eat, or whether he didn’t, at least he died, and being dead they sold his goods—why they sold them was not quite clear, but at the sale M. Bobineau was the chief purchaser. One of the chief lots was the set of ivory chessmen which had caught my eyes. They were the dead man’s favourite set, and no wonder! Bobineau was of opinion that if he had had his way he would have had them buried with him in his grave.

‘It is said,’ he whispered, again with the glance of mystery around, ‘that they found him dead, seated at the table, the chessmen on the board, his hand on the white rook, which was giving mate to the adversary’s king.’

Either what a vivid imagination had Bobineau, or what odd things the people said! One pictures the old man, seated all alone, with his last breath finishing his game.

Well, I bought the set of ivory chessmen. At this time of day I freely admit that they were cheap at two hundred and fifty

frances—dirt cheap, indeed; but a hundred was all I paid. I knew Bobineau so well—I dare say he bought them for twenty-five. As I bore them triumphantly away my mind was occupied by thoughts of their original possessor. I was filled by quite a sentimental tenderness as I meditated on the part they had played, according to Bobineau, in that last scene. But St. Servan drove all those thoughts away. Philippe Henri de St. Servan was rather a difficult person to get on with. It was with him I shared at that time my apartment on the *place*.

‘Let us see!’ I remarked when I got in, ‘what have I here?’

He was seated, his country pipe in his mouth, at the open window, looking down upon the river. The Havre boat was making ready to start—at Morlaix the nautical event of the week. There was quite a bustle on the quay. St. Servan just looked round, and then looked back again. I sat down and untied my purchase.

‘I think there have been criticisms—derogatory criticisms—passed by a certain person upon a certain set of chessmen. Perhaps that person will explain what he has to say to these.’

St. Servan marched up to the table. He looked at them through his half-closed eyelids.

‘Toys!’ was all he said.

‘Perhaps! Yet toys which made a tragedy. Have you ever heard of the name of Funichon?’ By a slight movement of his grisly grey eyebrows he intimated that it was possible he had. ‘These chessmen belonged to him. He had just finished a game with them when they found him dead—the winning piece, a white rook, was in his hand. Suggest an epitaph to be placed over his grave. There’s a picture for a painter—eh?’

‘Bah! He was a Communist!’

That was all St. Servan said. And so saying, St. Servan turned away to look out of the window at the Havre boat again. There was an end of M. Funichon for him. Not that he meant exactly what he said. He simply meant that M. Funichon was not Legitimist—out of sympathy with the gentlemen who met, and decayed, visibly, before the naked eye, at the club on the other side of the *place*. With St. Servan not to be Legitimist meant to be nothing at all—out of his range of vision absolutely. Seeing that was so, it is strange he should have borne with me as he did. But he was a wonderful old man.

## II.

We played our first game with the ivory chessmen when St. Servan returned from the club. I am free to confess that it was an occasion for me. I had dusted all the pieces, and had the board all laid when St. Servan entered, and when we drew for choice of moves the dominant feeling in my mind was the thought of the dead man sitting all alone, with the white rook in his hand. There was an odour of sanctity about the affair for me—a whiff of air from the land of the ghosts.

Nevertheless, my loins were girded up, and I was prepared to bear myself as a man in the strife. We were curiously well matched, St. Servan and I. We had played two hundred and twenty games, and, putting draws aside, each had scored the same number of wins. He had his days, and so had I. At one time I was eleven games ahead, but since that thrice blessed hour I had not scored a single game. He had tracked me steadily, and eventually had made the scores exactly tie. In these latter days it had grown with him to be an article of faith that as a chess player I was quite played out—and there was a time when I had thought the same of him!

He won the move, and then, as usual, there came an interval for reflection. The worst thing about St. Servan—regarded from a chess-playing point of view—was, that he took such a time to begin. When a man has opened his game it is excusable—laudable, indeed—if he pauses to reflect, a reasonable length of time. But I never knew a man who was so fond of reflection before a move was made. As a rule, that absurd habit of his had quite an irritating effect upon my nerves, but that evening I felt quite cool and prepared to sit him out.

There we sat, both smoking our great pipes, he staring at the board, and I at him. He put out his hand, almost touched a piece, and then, with a start, he drew it back again. An interval—the same pantomime again. Another interval—and a repetition of the pantomime. I puffed a cloud of smoke into the air, and softly sighed. I knew he had been ten minutes by my watch. Possibly the sigh had a stimulating effect, for he suddenly stretched out his hand and moved queen's knight's pawn a single square.

I was startled. He was great at book openings, that was the

absurdest part of it. He would lead you to suppose that he was meditating something quite original, and then would perhaps begin with fool's mate after all. He, at least, had never tried queen's knight's pawn a single square before.

I considered a reply. Pray let it be understood—though I would not have confessed it to St. Servan for the world—that I am no player. I am wedded to the game for an hour or two at night, or, peradventure, of an afternoon at times; but I shall never be admitted to its inner mysteries—never! not if I outspan Methuselah. I am not built that way. St. Servan and I were two children who, loving the sea, dabble their feet in the shallows left by the tide. I have no doubt that there are a dozen replies to that opening of his, but I did not know one then. I had some hazy idea of developing a game of my own, while keeping an eye on his, and for that purpose put out my hand to move the queen's pawn two, when I felt my wrist grasped by—well, by what felt uncommonly like an invisible hand. I was so startled that I almost dropped my pipe. I drew my hand back again, and was conscious of the slight detaining pressure of unseen fingers. Of course it was hallucination, but it seemed so real, and was so unexpected, that—well, I settled my pipe more firmly between my lips—it had all but fallen from my mouth, and took a whiff or two to calm my nerves. I glanced up, cautiously, to see if St. Servan noticed my unusual behaviour, but his eyes were fixed stonily upon the board.

After a moment's hesitation—it was absurd!—I stretched out my hand again. The hallucination was repeated, and in a very tangible form. I was distinctly conscious of my wrist being wrenched aside and guided to a piece I had never meant to touch, and almost before I was aware of it, instead of the move I had meant to make, I had made a servile copy of St. Servan's opening—I had moved queen's knight's pawn a single square!

To adopt the language of the late Dick Swiveller, that was a staggerer. I own that for an instant I was staggered. I could do nothing else but stare. For at least ten seconds I forgot to smoke. I was conscious that when St. Servan saw my move he knit his brows. Then the usual interval for reflection came again. Half unconsciously I watched him. When, as I supposed, he had decided on his move, he stretched out his hand, as I had done, and also, as I had done, he drew it back again. I was a little startled—he seemed a little startled, too. There was a momentary

pause ; back went his hand again, and, by way of varying the monotony, he moved—king's knight's pawn a single square.

I wondered, and held my peace. There might be a gambit based upon these lines, or there might not ; but since I was quite clear that I knew no reply to such an opening I thought I would try a little experiment, and put out my hand, not with the slightest conception of any particular move in my head, but simply to see what happened. Instantly a grasp fastened on my wrist ; my hand was guided to—king's knight's pawn a single square.

This was getting, from every point of view, to be distinctly interesting. The chessmen appeared to be possessed of a property of which Bobineau had been unaware. I caught myself wondering if he would have insisted on a higher price if he had known of it. Curiosities nowadays do fetch such fancy sums—and what price for a ghost ? They appeared to be automatic chessmen, automatic in a sense entirely their own.

Having made my move, or having had somebody else's move made for me, which is perhaps the more exact way of putting it, I contemplated my antagonist. When he saw what I had done, or what somebody else had done—the things are equal—St. Servan frowned. He belongs to the bony variety, the people who would not loll in a chair to save their lives—his aspect struck me as being even more poker-like than usual. He meditated his reply an unconscionable length of time, the more unconscionable since I strongly doubted if it would be his reply after all. But at last he showed signs of action. He kept his eyes fixed steadily upon the board, his frown became pronounced, and he began to raise his hand. I write 'began,' because it was a process which took some time. Cautiously he brought it up, inch by inch. But no sooner had he brought it over the board than his behaviour became quite singular. He positively glared, and to my eyes seemed to be having a struggle with his own right hand. A struggle in which he was worsted, for he leant back in his seat with a curiously discomfited air.

He had moved queen's rook's pawn two squares—the automatic principle which impelled these chessmen seemed to have a partiality for pawns.

It was my turn for reflection. I pressed the tobacco down in my pipe, and thought—or tried to think—it out. Was it an hallucination, and was St. Servan the victim of hallucination too ?

Had I moved those pawns spontaneously, actuated by the impulse of my own free will, or hadn't I? And what was the meaning of the little scene I had just observed? I am a tolerably strong man. It would require no slight exercise of force to compel me to move one piece when I had made up my mind that I would move another piece instead. I have been told, and I believe not altogether untruly told, that the rigidity of my right wrist resembles iron. I have not spent so much time in the tennis-court and fencing-room for nothing. I had tried one experiment. I thought I would try another. I made up my mind that I would move queen's pawn two—stop me who stop can.

I felt that St. Servan in his turn was watching me. Preposterously easy though the feat appeared to be as I resolved on its performance, I was conscious of an unusual degree of cerebral excitement—a sort of feeling of do or die. But as, in spite of the feeling, I didn't do, it was perhaps as well I didn't die. Intending to keep complete control over my own muscles, I raised my right hand, probably to the full as cautiously as St. Servan had done. I approached the queen's pawn. I was just about to seize the piece when that unseen grasp fastened on my wrist. I paused, with something of the feeling which induces the wrestler to pause before entering on the veritable tug of war. For one thing, I was desirous to satisfy myself as to the nature of the grasp—what it was that seemed to grasp me.

It seemed to be a hand. The fingers went over the back of my wrist, and the thumb beneath. The fingers were long and thin—it was altogether a slender hand. But it seemed to be a man's hand, and an old man's hand at that. The skin was tough and wrinkled, clammy and cold. On the little finger there was a ring, and on the first, about the region of the first joint, appeared to be something of the nature of a wart. I should say that it was anything but a beautiful hand, it was altogether too attenuated and clawlike, and I would have betted that it was yellow with age.

At first the pressure was slight, almost as slight as the touch of a baby's hand, with a gentle inclination to one side. But as I kept my own hand firm, stiff, resolved upon my own particular move, with, as it were, a sudden snap, the pressure tightened and, not a little to my discomfiture, I felt my wrist held as in an iron vice. Then, as it must have seemed to St. Servan, who, I was aware, was still keenly watching me, I began to struggle with

my own hand. The spectacle might have been fun to him, but the reality was, at that moment, anything but fun to me. I was dragged to one side. Another hand was fastened upon mine. My fingers were forced open—I had tightly clenched my fist to enable me better to resist—my wrist was forced down, my fingers were closed upon a piece, I was compelled to move it forward, my fingers were unfastened to replace the piece upon the board. The move completed, the unseen grasp instantly relaxed, and I was free, or appeared to be free, again to call my hand my own.

I had moved queen's rook's pawn two squares. This may seem comical enough to read about, but it was anything but comical to feel. When the thing was done I stared at St. Servan, and St. Servan stared at me. We stared at each other, I suppose, a good long minute, then I broke the pause.

'Anything the matter?' I inquired. He put up his hand and curled his moustache, and, if I may say so, he curled his lip as well. 'Do you notice anything odd about—about the game?' As I spoke about the game I motioned my hand towards my brand-new set of chessmen. He looked at me with hard suspicious eyes.

'Is it a trick of yours?' he asked.

'Is what a trick of mine?'

'If you do not know, then how should I?'

I drew a whiff or two from my pipe, looking at him keenly all the time, then signed towards the board with my hand.

'It's your move,' I said.

He merely inclined his head. There was a momentary pause. When he stretched out his hand he suddenly snatched it back again, and half started from his seat with a stifled execration.

'Did you feel anything upon your wrist?' I asked.

'Mon Dieu! It is not what I feel—see that!'

He was eyeing his wrist as he spoke. He held it out under the glare of the lamp. I bent across and looked at it. For so old a man he had a phenomenally white and delicate skin—under the glare of the lamp the impressions of finger-marks were plainly visible upon his wrist. I whistled as I saw them.

'Is it a trick of yours?' he asked again.

'It is certainly no trick of mine.'

'Is there anyone in the room besides us two?'

I shrugged my shoulders and looked round. He too looked round, with something I thought not quite easy in his glance.



‘Certainly no one of my acquaintance, and certainly no one who is visible to me!’

With his fair white hand—the left, not the one which had the finger-marks upon the wrist—St. Servan smoothed his huge moustache.

‘Someone, or something, has compelled me—yes, from the first—to move, not as I would, but—bah! I know not how.’

‘Exactly the same thing has occurred to me.’

I laughed. St. Servan glared. Evidently the humour of the thing did not occur to him, he being the sort of man who would require a surgical operation to make him see a joke. But the humorous side of the situation struck me forcibly.

‘Perhaps we are favoured by the presence of a ghost—perhaps even by the ghost of M. Funichon. Perhaps, after all, he has not yet played his last game with his favourite set. He may have returned—shall we say from—where?—to try just one more set-to with us! If, my dear sir’—I waved my pipe affably, as though addressing an unseen personage—‘it is really you, I beg you will reveal yourself—materialise is, I believe, the expression now in vogue—and show us the sort of ghost you are!’

Somewhat to my surprise, and considerably to my amusement, St. Servan rose from his seat and stood by the table, stiff and straight as a scaffold-pole.

‘These, Monsieur, are subjects on which one does not jest.’

‘Do you, then, believe in ghosts?’ I knew he was a superstitious man—witness his fidelity to the superstition of right divine—but this was the first inkling I had had of how far his superstition carried him.

‘Believe!—In ghosts! In what, then, do you believe? I, Monsieur, am a religious man.’

‘Do you believe, then, that a ghost is present with us now—the ghost, for instance, of M. Funichon?’

St. Servan paused. Then he crossed himself—actually crossed himself before my eyes. When he spoke there was a peculiar dryness in his tone.

‘With your permission, Monsieur, I will retire to bed.’

There was an exasperating thing to say! There must be a large number of men in the world who would give—well, a good round sum, to light even on the trail of a ghost. And here were we in the actual presence of something—let us say apparently curious, at any rate, and here was St. Servan calmly talking about

retiring to bed, without making the slightest attempt to examine the thing! It was enough to make the members of the Psychical Research Society turn in their graves. The mere suggestion fired my blood.

'I do beg, St. Servan, that you at least will finish the game.' I saw he hesitated, so I drove the nail well home. 'Is it possible that you, a brave man, having given proofs of courage upon countless fields, can turn tail at what is doubtless an hallucination after all?'

'Is it that Monsieur doubts my courage?'

I knew the tone—if I was not careful I should have an affair upon my hands.

'Come, St. Servan, sit down and finish the game.'

Another momentary pause. He sat down, and—it would not be correct to write that we finished the game, but we made another effort to go on. My pipe had gone out. I refilled and lighted it.

'You know, St. Servan, it is really nonsense to talk about ghosts.'

'It is a subject on which I never talk.'

'If something does compel us to make moves which we do not intend, it is something which is capable of a natural explanation.'

'Perhaps Monsieur will explain it, then?'

'I will! Before I've finished! If you only won't turn tail and go to bed! I think it very possible, too, that the influence, whatever it is, has gone—it is quite on the cards that our imagination has played us some subtle trick. It is your move, but before you do anything just tell me what move you mean to make.'

'I will move'—he hesitated—'I will move queen's pawn.'

He put out his hand, and, with what seemed to me hysterical suddenness, he moved king's rook's pawn two squares.

'So! Our friend is still here then! I suppose you did not change your mind?'

There was a *very* peculiar look about St. Servan's eyes.

'I did not change my mind.'

I noticed, too, that his lips were uncommonly compressed.

'It is my move now. I will move queen's pawn. We are not done yet. When I put out my hand you grasp my wrist—and we shall see what we shall see.'

'Shall I come round to you?'

'No, stretch out across the table—now!'

I stretched out my hand; that instant he stretched out his, but spontaneous though the action seemed to be, another, an unseen hand, had fastened on my wrist. He observed it too.

'There appears to be another hand between yours and mine.'

'I know there is.'

Before I had the words well out my hand had been wrenched aside, my fingers unclosed, and then closed, then unclosed again, and I had moved king's rook's pawn two squares. St. Servan and I sat staring at each other—for my part I felt a little bewildered.

'This is very curious! Very curious indeed! But before we say anything about it we will try another little experiment, if you don't mind. I will come over to you.' I went over to him. 'Let me grasp your wrist with both my hands.' I grasped it, as firmly as I could, as it lay upon his knee. 'Now try to move queen's pawn.'

He began to raise his hand, I holding on to his wrist with all my strength. Hardly had he raised it to the level of the table when two unseen hands, grasping mine, tore them away as though my strength were of no account. I saw him give a sort of shudder—he had moved queen's bishop's pawn two squares.

'This is a devil of a ghost!' I said.

St. Servan said nothing. But he crossed himself, not once, but half a dozen times.

'There is still one little experiment that I would wish to make.'

St. Servan shook his head.

'Not I!' he said.

'Ah but, my friend, this is an experiment which I can make without your aid. I simply want to know if there is nothing tangible about our unseen visitor except his hands. It is my move.' I returned to my side of the table. I again addressed myself, as it were, to an unseen auditor. 'My good ghost, my good M. Funichon—if it is you—you are at liberty to do as you desire with my hand.'

I held it out. It instantly was grasped. With my left hand I made several passes in the air up and down, behind and before, in every direction so far as I could. It met with no resistance. There seemed to be nothing tangible but those invisible fingers which grasped my wrist—and I had moved queen's bishop's pawn two squares.

St. Servan rose from his seat.

'It is enough. Indeed it is too much. This ribaldry must cease. It had been better had Monsieur permitted me to retire to bed.'

'Then you are sure it is a ghost—the ghost of M. Funichon, we'll say.'

'This time Monsieur must permit me to wish him a good night's rest.'

He bestowed on me, as his manner was, a stiff inclination of the head, which would have led a stranger to suppose that we had met each other for the first time ten minutes ago, instead of being the acquaintances of twelve good years. He moved across the room.

'St. Servan, one moment before you go! You are surely not going to leave a man alone at the post of peril.'

'It were better that Monsieur should come too.'

'Half a second, and I will. I have only one remark to make, and that is to the ghost.'

I rose from my seat. St. Servan made a half-movement towards the door, then changed his mind and remained quite still.

'If there is any other person with us in the room, may I ask that person to let us hear his voice, or hers? Just to speak one word.'

Not a sound.

'It is possible—I am not acquainted with the laws which govern—eh—ghosts—that the faculty of speech is denied to them. If that be so, might I ask for the favour of a sign—for instance, move a piece while my friend and I are standing where we are.'

Not a sign; not a chessman moved.

'Then M. Funichon, if it indeed be you, and you are incapable of speech, or even of moving a piece of your own accord, and are only able to spoil our game, I beg to inform you that you are an exceedingly ill-mannered and foolish person, and had far better have stayed away.'

As I said this I was conscious of a current of cold air before my face, as though a swiftly moving hand had shaved my cheek.

'By Jove, St. Servan, something has happened at last. I believe our friend the ghost has tried to box my ears!'

St. Servan's reply came quietly stern.

'I think it were better that Monsieur came with me.'

For some reason St. Servan's almost contemptuous coldness fired my blood. I became suddenly enraged.

'I shall do nothing of the kind! Do you think I am going to be fooled by a trumpery conjuring trick which would disgrace a shilling séance? Driven to bed at this time of day by a ghost! And such a ghost! If it were something like a ghost one wouldn't mind; but a fool of a ghost like this!'

Even as the words passed my lips I felt the touch of fingers against my throat. The touch increased my rage. I snatched at them, only to find that there was nothing there.

'Damn you!' I cried. 'Funichon, you old fool, do you think that you can frighten me? You see those chessmen; they are mine, bought and paid for with my money—you dare to try and prevent me doing with them exactly as I please.'

Again the touch against my throat. It made my rage the more. 'As I live, I will smash them all to pieces, and grind them to powder beneath my heel.'

My passion was ridiculous—childish even. But then the circumstances were exasperating—unusually so, one might plead. I was standing three or four feet from the table. I dashed forward. As I did so a hand was fastened on my throat. Instantly it was joined by another. They gripped me tightly. They maddened me. With a madman's fury I still pressed forward. I might as well have fought with fate. They clutched me as with bands of steel, and flung me to the ground.

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### III.

When I recovered consciousness I found St. Servan bending over me.

'What is the matter?' I inquired, when I found that I was lying on the floor.

'I think you must have fainted.'

'Fainted! I never did such a thing in my life. It must have been a curious kind of faint, I think.'

'It was a curious kind of faint.'

With his assistance I staggered to my feet. I felt bewildered. I glanced round. There were the chessmen still upon the board, the hanging lamp above. I tried to speak. I seemed to have lost the use of my tongue. In silence he helped me to the door.

He half led, half carried me—for I seemed to have lost the use of my feet as well as that of my tongue—to my bedroom. He even assisted me to undress, never leaving me till I was between the sheets. All the time not a word was spoken. When he went I believe he took the key outside and locked the door.

That was a night of dreams. I know not if I was awake or sleeping, but all sorts of strange things presented themselves to my mental eye. I could not shut them from my sight. One figure was prominent in all I saw—the figure of a man. I knew, or thought I knew, that it was M. Funichon. He was a lean old man, and what I noticed chiefly were his hands. Such ugly hands! In some fantastical way I seemed to be contending with them all through the night.

And yet in the morning when I woke—for I did wake up, and that from as sweet refreshing sleep as one might wish to have—it was all gone. It was bright day. The sun was shining into the great, ill-furnished room. As I got out of bed and began to dress, the humorous side of the thing had returned to me again. The idea of there being anything supernatural about a set of ivory chessmen appeared to me to be extremely funny.

I found St. Servan had gone out. It was actually half-past ten! His table d'hôte at the Hôtel de Bretagne was at eleven, and before he breakfasted he always took a *petit verre* at the club. If he had locked the door overnight he had not forgotten to unlock it before he started. I went into the rambling, barn-like room which served us for a *salon*. The chessmen had disappeared. Probably St. Servan had put them away—I wondered if the ghost had interfered with him. I laughed to myself as I went out—fancy St. Servan contending with a ghost.

The proprietor of the Hôtel de Bretagne is Legitimist, so all the aristocrats go there—of course, St. Servan with the rest. Presumably the landlord's politics is the point, to his cooking they are apparently indifferent—I never knew a worse table in my life! The landlord of the Hôtel de l'Europe may be a Communist for all I care—*his* cooking is first-rate, so I go there. I went there that morning. After I had breakfasted I strolled off towards the Grande Rue, to M. Bobineau.

When he saw me M. Bobineau was all smirks and smiles—he *must* have got those chessmen for *less* than five-and-twenty francs! I asked him if he had any more of the belongings of M. Funichon.

‘But certainly! Three other sets of chessmen.’

I didn’t want to look at those, apparently one set was quite enough for me. Was that all he had?

‘But no! There was an ancient bureau, very magnificent, carved——’

I thanked him—nor did I want to look at that. In the Grande Rue at Morlaix old bureaux carved about the beginning of the fifteenth century—if you listen to the vendors—are as plentiful as cobble-stones.

‘But I have all sorts of things of M. Funichon. It was I who bought them nearly all. Books, papers, and——’

M. Bobineau waved his hands towards a multitude of books and papers which crowded the shelves at the side of his shop. I took a volume down. When I opened it I found it was in manuscript.

‘That work is unique!’ explained Bobineau. ‘It was the intention of M. Funichon to give it to the world, but he died before his purpose was complete. It is the record of all the games of chess he ever played—in fifty volumes. Monsieur will perceive it is unique.’

I should think it was unique! In fifty volumes! The one I held was a large quarto, bound in leather, containing some six or seven hundred pages, and was filled from cover to cover with matter in a fine, clear handwriting, written on both sides of the page. I pictured the face of the publisher to whom it was suggested that *he* should give to the world such a work as that.

I opened the volume at the first page. It was, as Bobineau said, apparently the record, with comments, of an interminable series of games of chess. I glanced at the initial game. Here are the opening moves, just as they were given there:—

*White.*

Queen’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.  
King’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.  
Queen’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.  
King’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

*Black.*

Queen’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.  
King’s Knight’s Pawn, one square.  
Queen’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.  
King’s Rook’s Pawn, two squares.

They were exactly the moves of the night before. They were such peculiar moves, and made under such peculiar circumstances, that I was scarcely likely to mistake them. So far as we had gone, St. Servan and I, assisted by the unseen hand, had reproduced M. Funichon’s initial game in the first volume of his fifty—and a very peculiar game it seemed to be. I asked Bobineau what he would take for the volume which I held.

‘Monsieur perceives that to part them would spoil the set,



which is unique. Monsieur shall have the whole fifty'—I shuddered. I imagine Bobineau saw I did, he spoke so very quickly—'for a five-franc piece, which is less than the value of the paper and the binding.'

I knew then that he had probably been paid for carting the rubbish away. However, I paid him his five-franc piece, and marched off with the volume under my arm, giving him to understand, to his evident disappointment, that at my leisure I would give him instructions as to the other forty-nine.

As I went along I thought the matter over. M. Funichon seemed to have been a singular kind of man—he appeared to have carried his singularity even beyond the grave. Could it have been the cold-blooded intention of his ghost to make us play the whole contents of the fifty volumes through? What a fiend of a ghost his ghost must be!

I opened the volume and studied the initial game. The people were right who had said that the man was mad. None but an imbecile would have played such a game—his right hand against his left!—and none but a raving madman would have recorded his imbecility in black and white, as though it were a thing to be proud of! Certainly none but a criminal lunatic would have endeavoured to foist his puerile travesty of the game and study of chess upon two innocent men.

Still the thing was curious. I flattered myself that St. Servan would be startled when he saw the contents of the book I was carrying home. I resolved that I would instantly get out the chessmen and begin another game—perhaps the ghost of M. Funichon would favour us with a further exposition of his ideas of things. I even made up my mind that I would communicate with the Psychical Research Society. Not at all improbably they might think the case sufficiently remarkable to send down a member of their body to inquire into the thing upon the spot. I almost began to hug myself on the possession of a ghost, a ghost, too, which might be induced to perform at will—almost on the principle of 'drop a coin into the slot and the figures move'! It was cheap at a hundred francs. What a stir those chessmen still might make! What vexed problems they might solve! Unless I was much mistaken, the expenditure of those hundred francs had placed me on the royal road to immortality.

Filled with such thoughts I reached our rooms. I found that St. Servan had returned. With him, if I may say so, he had brought his friends. Such friends! Ye Goths! When I opened

the door the first thing which greeted me was a strong, not to say suffocating, smell of incense. The room was filled with smoke. A fire was blazing on the hearth. Before it was St. Servan, on his knees, his hands clasped in front of him, in an attitude of prayer. By him stood a priest, in his robes of office. He held what seemed a pestle and mortar, whose contents he was throwing by handfuls on to the flames, muttering some doggerel to himself the while. Behind him were two acolytes,

With nice clean faces, and nice white stoles,

who were swinging censers—hence the odour which filled the room. I was surprised when I beheld all this. They appeared to be holding some sort of religious service—and I had not bargained for that sort of thing when I had arranged with St. Servan to share the rooms with him. In my surprise I unconsciously interrupted the proceedings.

‘St. Servan! Whatever is the meaning of this?’

St. Servan looked up, and the priest looked round—that was all the attention they paid to me. The acolytes eyed me with what I conceived to be a grin upon their faces. But I was not to be put down like that.

‘I must ask you, St. Servan, for an explanation.’

The priest turned the mortar upside down, and emptied the remainder of its contents into the fire.

‘It is finished,’ he said.

St. Servan rose from his knees and crossed himself.

‘We have exorcised the demon,’ he observed.

‘You have what?’ I asked.

‘We have driven out the evil spirit which possessed the chessmen.’

I gasped. A dreadful thought struck me.

‘You don’t mean to say that you have dared to play tricks with my property?’

‘Monsieur,’ said the priest, ‘I have ground it into dust.’

He had. That fool of a St. Servan had actually fetched his parish priest, and his acolytes, and their censers, and between them they had performed a comminatory service made and provided for the driving out of demons. They had ground my ivory chessmen in the pestle and mortar, and then burned them in the fire. And this in the days of the Psychical Research Society! And they had cost me a hundred francs! And that idiot of a ghost had never stretched out a hand or said a word!

### AN EXCAVATOR'S EXTRACTS.

THE search for traces of an old world takes an excavator now and again into strange corners of the new. Out of the ground he may extract treasures, or he may not—that is not our point here; out of the inhabitants and their strange ways he is sure, whether he likes it or not, to extract a great deal; and it is with this branch of an excavator's life we are now going to deal.

We—that is to say, two excavators, male and female—were in the Persian Gulf last winter. We were on two islands off the north coast of Arabia. We thought we were on the track of Phœnician remains, and our interest in our work was like the fingers of an aneroid, subject to sudden changes, but at the same time we had perpetually around us a quaint unknown world of the present more pleasing to most people than anything pertaining to the past.

The two Bahrein islands can distinctly be seen on any map of repute in their hollow bay close to the Arabian coast. The sea around them is shallow, the happy hunting-ground of the pearl-fishers—so shallow that even the smallest boats cannot approach the shore, and from the craft which rowed us as far as it could we were in mid-ocean transferred, bag and baggage, to asses—those lovely white asses of Bahrein, with tails and manes dyed yellow with henna, and grotesque patterns illuminating their flanks; we had no reins, no stirrups, and the asses, though more intelligent than our own, will not unfrequently show obstinacy in the water, and the rider, firmly grasping his pommel, reaches with thankfulness the slimy, oozy beach of Bahrein.

The islands are low-lying and sandy, but with wavy palm-groves, which relieve the monotony of the desert and produce dates inferior to none in the Gulf. Manamah is the name of the town at which you land; it is the commercial capital of the islands—just a streak of white houses and bamboo huts, extending about a mile and a half along the shore. A few mosques with low minarets may be seen, with stone steps up one side for the priest to ascend for the call to prayer. These mosques and the towers of the richer pearl-merchants show some decided architectural features, having arches of the Saracenic order, with

fretwork of plaster and quaint stucco patterns. On landing we were at once surrounded by a jabbering crowd of nigger slaves, and stately Arabs with long flowing robes and twisted camel-hair cords (akkals) around their heads. Our home was one of the best of the battlemented towers, and consisted of a room 16 feet square, on a stone platform. It had twenty-six windows with no glass in them, but pretty lattice of plaster. Our wooden lock was highly decorated, and we had a wooden key to close our door, which pleased us much. Even though we were close upon the tropics we found our abode chilly enough after sunset, and our nights were rendered hideous, firstly, by the barking of dogs; secondly, by cocks, which crowed at an inordinately early hour; and, thirdly, by pious Mussulmans hard at work praying before the sun arose.

From our elevated position we could look down into a sea of bamboo huts, the habitations of the pearl-fishers, neat abodes enough, with courtyards paved with helix shells. In these courtyards stood quaint large water-jars, which women filled from goat-skins carried on their shoulders from the wells, wabbling like live headless animals when full, and cradles, like hencoops, for their babies. They were a merry idle lot of folk just then, for it was not their season of work, perpetually playing games, of which tip-jack and top-spinning seemed the favourite for both young and old. Staid Arabs, with turbans and long flowing robes, spinning tops formed a sight of which we never tired.

The bazaars of Manamah are narrow shaded alleys with an infinite number of smells, but they are quaint; at every corner sits a coffee-vendor—the publican of the Bahreinee. His series of coffee-pots are peculiar to the locality, and very picturesque: they are of brass, adorned with quaint patterns in concentric circles, and possessing long beaks like flamingoes, and in the lid small stones are kept to rattle and attract the attention of the passer-by. Every other stall has dates to sell in thick masses, the chief food of the islanders. Then, you may see locusts, pressed and pickled in barrels; the poorer inhabitants are very fond of this diet, and have converted the curse of the cultivator into favourite delicacies. As for weights, the stall-holders would appear to have none but stones and whelk shells, which must be hard to regulate.

The Bahrein Islands have been likened to a sheet of silver in a sea of pearl. I must admit that we never saw the resemblance, but before proceeding inland let us say a word or two about the

inhabitants. They are chiefly Arabs, Bedouins of a sedentary turn of mind, governed by an independent Sheikh, whose court is held at the town of Moharrek, situated on the smaller of the two islands, and separated from Manamah by a narrow strait, which can be crossed at low tide on donkey-back, so shallow is the sea. The royal family is a numerous one, a branch of the El Kaleefahs, who ruled over El Hasa, on the mainland of Arabia, until their country was appropriated by the Turks a few years ago. Sheikh Esau is the name of the present Prince of Bahrein. He is most subservient to British interests, inasmuch as his predecessors, who loved not England, were shipped off to India, and still languish there in exile. Most of the Bahreinee, if not actually belonging to that strict sect of Arabians known as Wahabee, have strong puritanical proclivities. Our total-abstinence men are nothing to them in bigotry. If a vendor of intoxicating liquor started a shop on Bahrein, they would burn his house down, so that the wicked who want to drink have to buy the material secretly from ships in the harbour. Many think it wrong to smoke, and spend their lives in prayer and fasting. Church decoration is an abomination to the Wahabee; hence in Bahrein the mosques are little better than barns with low minarets, for the long tall ones of other Mohammedan sects are forbidden. The Wahabees are fanatics of the deepest dye; 'there is one God, and Mohamed is his prophet,' they say with the rest of the Mohammedan world, but the followers of Abdul Wahab add, 'and in no case must Mohamed and the Imams be worshipped lest glory be detracted from God.' All titles to them are odious; no grand tombs are to be erected over their dead, no mourning is allowed; hence the cemetery at Manamah is but a pitiful place—a vast collection of circles set with rough stones, with a small uninscribed headpiece, and the surface sprinkled with helix shells.

The Wahabee would wage, if they dared, perpetual war, not only against the infidel, but against such perverted individuals as those who go to worship at Mecca and other sacred shrines. The founder of this revival is reported to have beaten his sons to death for drinking wine, and to have made his daughters support themselves by spinning, but at the same time he felt himself entitled to give to a fanatical follower, who courted death for his sake, an order for an emerald palace, and lots of female slaves in the world to come.

Sheikh Esau and the royal family are of strong Wahabee tendencies. We went to visit him one day at Moharrekk, and for our penance we had to drink the bitterest coffee imaginable, followed by cups of sweet syrup flavoured with cinnamon. His majesty's dress was exceedingly fine. He and his family are entitled to wear their camel's-hair bands bound round with gold. These looked very regal over the red turban, and his long black coat, with his silver studded sword by his side, made him look every inch a king. The courtyard of his palace, a good specimen of Arabian architecture, was filled with sheikhs of royal and inferior birth, forming his retinue. We photographed a line of them, for their dress and bearing seemed to give us a wonderful picture of the court life of an Arabian chieftain.

Sheikh Esau's representative at Manamah—his prime minister, or viceroy, we should call him, though he is usually known there by the humble-sounding title of the 'Bazaar-master'—is by name Saed Ben Omar, a very stout and nearly black individual with a European cast of countenance. He looked exceedingly grand when he came to see us, in his under-robe of scarlet cloth, with a cloak of rustling and stiff white wool with a little red woven in it. Over his head floated a white cashmere shawl, with the usual camel's-hair rings to keep it on, and sandals on his bare feet. He was deputed by his sovereign to look after us, and during the fortnight we were on the island he never left us for a single day. Though outwardly very strict in his asceticism, and constantly apt to say his prayers, with his nose in the dust, at inconvenient moments, I found him by no means averse to a cigarette in the strictest privacy, and I learnt that his private life would not bear European investigation. He is constantly getting married. Though sixty years of age he had a young bride of a few weeks' standing. I was assured that he would soon tire of her and put her away. Even in polygamous Arabia he is looked upon as a much-married man.

Of course the pearl-fishery is the great occupation of the Bahreinee. The pearls of their seas are celebrated for their firmness, and do not peel. They are commonly reported to lose one per cent. annually for fifty years in colour and water, but after that they remain the same. They have seven skins, whereas the Cingalese pearls have only six. The merchants generally buy them wholesale by the old Portuguese weight of the *Chao*. They divide them into different sizes with sieves and sell them in



India, so that—as is usually the case with specialities—it is impossible to buy a good pearl on Bahrein.

Diving here is exceedingly primitive; all the necessary paraphernalia are a loop of rope and a stone to go down with, a curious horn thing to hold the nose, and oil for the orifice of the ears. Once a merchant brought with him a diving-apparatus, but the divers were highly indignant, and, leaguering against him, refused to show the best banks. In this way the fisheries suffer, for the best pearls are in the deeper waters, which can only be visited late in the season. The divers are mostly negro slaves from Africa; they do not live long, poor creatures, developing awful sores and weak eyes, and they live and die entirely without medical aid.

Very curious boats ply in the waters between Manamah and Moharrek; the huge ungainly buggalows can only sail in the deeper channels; they have very long pointed prows elegantly carved and decorated with shells; when the wind is contrary they are propelled by poles or paddles consisting of boards of any shape tied to the end of the poles with twine, and the oarsman always seats himself on the gunwale. Sheikh Esau has a very fine buggalow of his own, and also a war-pinnace, which, since British rule has put down piracy in the Gulf, is not of much use. Then there are the bamboo skiffs with decks almost flush with the side, requiring great skill in working. We crossed over to Moharrek in a small buggalow, and had to be poled for a great distance with our keel perpetually grating on the bottom. We were glad when the donkeys came alongside, and we performed what was left of our voyage on their backs. Boats are really of but little use immediately around the islands. You see men walking in the sea quite a mile out collecting shellfish and seaweeds, which form a staple diet for both man and beast on Bahrein.

Moharrek is aristocratic, being the seat of government; Manamah is essentially commercial; and between them in the sea is a huge dismantled Portuguese fort, now used as Sheikh Esau's stables. Moharrek is dependent for its water supply on a curious well beneath the sea; they sink skins and jars below the salt water with extraordinary skill, and bring up delightful fresh drinking-water from the depths of the ocean. I never saw so curious a phenomenon before; they tell me that the spring comes up with such force that it drives back the salt water and never gets impregnated. All I can answer for is that the water is excellent to drink.



Behold the excavators on the way to the scene of their labours. Six camels convey their tent, a seventh carries goatskins full of water. Four asses groan under their personal effects; hens for consumption ride in a sort of lobster-pot by the side of pickaxes and chairs; six policemen, or *peons*, are in their train, each on a donkey. One carries a paraffin lamp in his hand, another a basket of eggs; and as there are no reins and no stirrups, the wonder is that these articles ever survive. As for themselves, the excavators who ride sideways hold on like grim death before and behind, especially when the frisky Bahrein donkeys galloped at steeplechase pace across the desert.

For some distance around Manamah all is arid desert, on which a few scrubby plants grow, which women cut for fodder with sickles like saws, and carry home in large bundles on their backs. Sheikh Esau's summer palace is in the centre of this desert—a fortress hardly distinguishable from the sand around, and consisting, like Eastern structures of this nature, of nothing but one room over the gateway for his majesty, and a vast courtyard, 200 feet long, where his attendants erect their bamboo huts and tents. Around the whole runs a wall with bastions at either corner, very formidable to look upon. Passing this, the palm-groves are soon reached, which are exceedingly fine, and offer delicious shade from the burning sun. Here amongst the trees were women working in picturesque attire, red petticoats, orange-coloured drawers down to their heels, and a dark-blue covering over all this, which would suddenly be pulled over the face at our approach, if they had not on their masks, or *buttras*, which admit of a good stare. On their heads would be baskets with dates or citrons, and now and again a particularly modest one would dart behind a palm-tree until that dangerous animal man had gone by.

About half way to the scene of our labours we halted by the ruins of the old Arab town of Beled-al-Kedim, with its lovely mosque with minarets decorated with Kuphic patterns and inscriptions, but now in ruins, which tell of an age long gone by, when the Wahabee fanatics did not rule on Bahrein. Here on Thursday is held a market, and the place is now known only as Suk-al-Khamis, or 'Thursday's market.' Later on we visited this curious gathering of Bahreinee, but on our journey out not a living soul was near.

Sheikh Esau has here a tiny mosque, just an open loggia, where he goes every morning in summertime to pray and take

his coffee. Beneath it he has a bath of fresh but not over-clean water, where he and his family bathe. Often during the summer heats he spends the whole day here, or else he goes to his glorious garden about a mile distant near the coast, where acacias, hibiscus, and almonds fight with one another for the mastery, and form a delicious jungle. Near this spot is a very large Portuguese fort, with bastions in ruins, but well preserved, and there is also a large and curious well in the palm-groves, 50 feet across and 3 fathoms deep, of clear but brackish water, with ruins of a bath-house close to, and lovely prismatic colours in its depths. Undoubtedly in bygone ages Beled-al-Kedim was the capital of Bahrein, a flourishing and well-favoured spot.

For miles we passed through palm-groves, watered by their little artificial conduits, and producing the staple food of the island. Saed Ben Omar talked to us much about the date. 'Mohamed said,' he began, 'honour the date-tree, for she is your mother,'—a true enough maxim in parched Arabia, where nothing else will grow. When ripe the dates are put into a round tank, called the *madibash*, where they are exposed to the sun and air, and throw off excessive juice which collects below; after three days of this treatment they are removed and packed for exportation in baskets of palm-leaves. The Bahreinee, for their own consumption, love to add sesame seeds to their dates, or ginger-powder and walnuts pressed with them into jars. These are called *seerah*, and are originally prepared by being dried in the sun and protected at night, then diluted date-juice is poured over them. The fruit which does not reach maturity is called *salang*, and is given as food to cattle, boiled with date-stones and fish-bones. This makes an excellent sort of cake for milch cows, and the green dates, too, are given to the donkeys, to which the Bahreinee attribute their great superiority. The very poor also make an exceedingly unpalatable dish out of green dates mixed with fish for their own table, or, I should say, floor.

Nature here is not strong enough for the fructification of the palm, so at given seasons the pollen is removed by cutting off the male spathes when ready; these they dry for twenty hours, and then they take the flower twigs, and deposit one or two in each bunch of the female blossom. Just as we were there they were very busy with the spathes, and in Thursday's market huge baskets of the male spathes were exposed for sale. The palm-groves are surrounded by dikes to keep the water in, and the fins of a species

of ray-fish, after being put in tanks to decompose, is the most approved form of manure.

The date-tree is everything to a Bahreinee. He beats the green spadix with wooden implements to make fibre for his ropes; in the dry state he uses it as fuel; he makes his mats, the only known form of carpet and bedding here, out of it; his baskets are made of the leaves; from the fresh spathe, by distillation, a certain stuff called Tara water is obtained, of strong but agreeable smell, which is much used for making sherbet of. Much legendary lore is connected with the date. The small round hole at the back is said to have been made by Mohamed's teeth, when one day he foolishly tried to bite one; and in some places the expression 'at the same time a date and a duty' is explained by the fact that in Ramazan the day's fast is usually broken by first eating a date.

Amongst all these date-groves are the curious Arab wells with sloping runs, and worked by donkeys; the tall poles to which the skins are attached are date-tree trunks; down goes the skin as the donkey comes up its run, and then up it comes again full of water as the donkey descends, to be guided by a slave into the water-channel which fertilises the trees. Day after day in our camp we heard the weird creaking of these wells, very early in the morning and in the evening, when the sun had gone down, and we felt as we heard them what an infinite blessing is a well of water in a thirsty land.

The excavators' camp was a sight to see, all amongst the tumuli of a departed race, which extend for miles and miles over the arid desert of Bahrein; their own tent occupied a conspicuous and central place, their servants' tent was hard by, liable to be blown down by heavy gusts of wind, which event happened the first night after their arrival, to the infinite discomfiture of the Bazaar-master, who, by the way, had left his grand clothes at home, and appeared in the desert clad in a loose coffee-coloured dressing-gown, with a red band round his waist. Around the tents swarmed turbaned diggers, who looked as if they had come out in their night-gowns, dressing-gowns, and bath-sheets. These lodged at night in the bamboo village of Ali hard by, a place for which we developed the profoundest contempt, for the women thereof refused to pollute themselves by washing the clothes of infidels, and our dirty garments had to be sent all the way to Manamah to be cleansed. A bamboo structure formed a shelter for the kitchen, around which, on the sand, lay curious coffee-pots,

bowls, and cooking utensils, which would have been eagerly sought after for museums in Europe. The camel, which fetched the daily supply of water from afar, grazed around on the coarse desert herbage; also the large white donkey, which went into the town for marketing by day, and entangled himself in the tent ropes by night, was left to wander at his own sweet will. It was a very peculiar sight indeed, this desert camp; and no wonder that for the first week of their residence there, the excavators were visited by all the inhabitants of Bahrein who could find time to come so far.

The first day came five camels with two riders apiece and a train of donkeys, bringing rich pearl merchants from the capital; these sat in a circle and complacently drank our coffee and ate our mixed biscuits, without in any way troubling us, having apparently come for no other object than to get this slender refreshment. But next day came Prince Mohamed, a young man of seventeen, a nephew of Sheikh Esau, who is about to wed his uncle's daughter, and is talked of as the heir-apparent to the throne; he was all gorgeous in a white embroidered robe, red turban, and head rings bound in royal gold; he played with our pistols with covetous eyes, ate some English cake, having first questioned the Bazaar-master as to the orthodoxy of its ingredients, and then he promised us a visit next day. He came on a beautifully caparisoned horse, with red trappings and gold tassels. He brought with him many followers on the morrow, and announced his intention of passing the day with us, rather to our distress; but we were appeased by the present of a fat lamb with one of those large bushy tails, which remind one forcibly of a lady's bustle, and suggest that the ingenious milliner who invented these atrocities must have taken for her pattern an Eastern lamb. This day Prince Mohamed handled the revolver more covetously than ever, and got so far as exchanging his scarlet embroidered case with red silk belt and silver buckle for my leathern one.

That afternoon a great cavalcade of gazelle huntsmen called upon us. The four chief men of these had each a hooded falcon on his arm, and a tawny Persian greyhound with long silken tail at his side; they wore their sickle-like daggers in their waistbands; their bodies were enveloped in long cloaks, and their heads in white clothes bound round with the camel's-hair straps; they were accompanied by another young scion of the El Kaleefah family, who bestrode a white Arab steed with the gayest possible

trappings. Thus was the young prince attired: on his head a cashmere kerchief with gold *akkals*, he was almost smothered in an orange cloth gown trimmed with gold and lined with green, the sleeves of which were very long, cut open at the end and trimmed; over this robe was cast a black cloth cloak trimmed with gold on the shoulders, and a richly inlaid sword dangled at his side, almost as big as himself, for he was but an undersized boy of fifteen.

In the desert of Bahrein there are many gazelles, which they hunt with falcons and greyhounds; when let loose and unhooded the falcon skims rapidly along the ground till it reaches the gazelle, then it pounces on its victim's head and so injures it that it falls an easy prey to the pursuing hounds. Our sportsmen made a very nice group for our photography, as did almost everything around us on Bahrein.

Any excavator would have lost patience with the men of Bahrein with whom he had to deal; tickets had to be issued to prevent more working than were wanted, and claiming pay at the end of the day; ubiquity was essential, for they loved to get out of sight and do nothing; with unceasing regularity the pipe went round and they paused for a 'drink' at the hubble-bubble, as the Arabs express it; morning and evening prayers were, I am sure, unnecessarily long; accidents would happen, which alarmed us at first, until we learnt how ready they were to cry wolf; one man was knocked over by a stone, we thought by his contortions some limb must be broken, and we applied vaseline, our only available remedy, to the bruise; his fellow-workmen then seized him by the shoulders, shook him well 'to put the bones right again,' as they expressed it, and he continued his work as before. The Bazaar-master and the policemen would come and seize frantically a tool and work for a few seconds with herculean vigour by way of example, which was never followed. 'Yallah!' ('hurry on'); 'Marhabbah!' ('very good'), the men would cry, and they would sing and scream with vigour that nearly drove us wild. But for the occasional application of a stick and great firmness, we should have got nothing out of them but noise.

One day we had a mutiny because I dismissed two men who came very late; the rest refused to work, and came dancing round us and shouting and brandishing spades: one had actually got hold of a naked sword, which weapon I did not at all like, and I was thankful Prince Mohamed had not yet got my revolver. For some time they continued this wild, weird dance, consigning us

freely to the lower regions as they danced, and then they all went away, so that the Bazaar-master had to be sent in search of other and more amenable men. Evidently, Sheikh Esau when he entrusted us to the charge of the Bazaar-master and sent policemen with us was afraid of something untoward happening. Next day we heard that his majesty was coming in person with his tents to encamp in our vicinity, and I fancy we were in more danger from those men than we realised at the moment, fanned as they are into hatred of the infidel by the fanatical Wahabee; and thirty years ago I was told no infidel could have ventured into the centre of Bahrein with safety.

Another important visitor came on Saturday in the shape of Sheikh Khallet, a cousin of the ruling chief, with a retinue of ten men from Roufaa, an inland village. We sat for a while on our heels in rows, conversing and smiling, and finally accepted an invitation from Sheikh Khallet to visit him at his village, and make a little tour over the island. Accordingly, on Sunday morning we started, accompanied by the Bazaar-master, for Roufaa, and we were not a little relieved to get away before Sheikh Esau was upon us, and the formalities which his royal presence in our midst would have necessitated.

We had an exceedingly hot ride of it, and the wind was so high that our position on our donkeys was rendered even more precarious; the sandy desert whirled around us, we shut our eyes, tied down our hats, and tried to be patient; for miles our road led through the tumuli of those mysterious dead, who once in their thousands must have peopled Bahrein; their old wells are still to be seen in the desert, and evidences of a cultivation which has long ago disappeared. As we approached the edge of this vast necropolis the mounds grew less and less, until mere heaps of stones marked the spot where a dead man lay, and then we saw before us the two villages of Roufaa, one called 'mountainous Roufaa,' a sort of castellated village built on a cliff, fifty feet above the lowest level of the desert; from here there is a view over a wide bleak expanse of sand, occasionally relieved by an oasis, the result of a well and irrigation, and beyond this the eye rests on Jebel Dukhan, 'the mountain of mist,' which high-sounding name has been given to a mass of rocks in the centre of Bahrein, rising 400 feet above the plain, and often surrounded by a sea mist. Bahrein, with its low-lying land, is often in a mist. Some mornings on rising early we looked out of our tent to find ourselves



enveloped in a perfect London fog, our clothes were soaking, the sand on the floor of our tent was soft and adhesive: then in an hour the bright orb of heaven would disperse all this, for we were very far south indeed, on the coast of Arabia. 'Mountainous Roufaa' is the property of young Prince Mohamed.

Then there is 'South-Western Roufaa,' quite a big place, inhabited by many members of the Kaleefah family, including Sheikh Khallet, and their dependents. As our arrival became known all the village turned out to see us: the advent of an English lady amongst them was something too excessively novel; even close-veiled women forgot their prudery, and peered out from their blue coverings, screaming with laughter, and pointing, as they screamed, to the somewhat appalled object of their mirth. 'Hadi Beebee!' ('there goes the lady') shouted they again and again. No victorious potentate ever had a more triumphant entry into his capital than the English 'Beebee' had on entering South-Western Roufaa.

Sheikh Khallet was ready to receive us in his *kahwa* or reception-room, furnished solely by strips of matting and a camel's-hair rug with coarse embroidery on it; two pillows were produced for us, and Arabs squatted on the matting all round the wall; for it was Sheikh Khallet's morning reception, or *majilis*, just then, and we were the lions of the occasion. Our host, we soon learnt, rather to our dismay, was a most rigid ascetic, a Wahabee to the backbone; he allows of no internal decorations in his house, no smoking is allowed, no wine, only perpetual coffee and perpetual prayers; our prospects were not of the most brilliant. After a while all the company left, and Sheikh Khallet intimated to us that the room was now our own. Two large pillows were brought, and rugs were laid down; as for the rest we were dependent on our own very limited resources.

Sheikh Saba, who had married Sheikh Khallet's sister, was a great contrast to our host; he had been in Bombay, and had imbibed in his travels a degree of worldliness which ill became a Wahabee; he had filled his house, to which he took us, with all sorts of baubles—gilt looking-glasses, coloured glass balls in rows and rows up to the ceiling, lovely pillows and carpets, Zanzibar date baskets, Bombay inlaid chests, El Hasa coffee-pots, and a Russian tea-urn—a truly marvellous conglomeration of things, which produced on us a wonderful sense of pleasure and repose after the bareness of our host's abode. Sheikh Saba wore only his long white



shirt and turban, and so unconventional was he that he allowed his consort to remain at one end of the room whilst I was there.

My wife penetrated into many of the harems at Roufaa, followed by such a crowd of gazers that one good lady grew enraged at the invasion and threw a cup of coffee in an intruder's face. In the afternoon we rode over to 'Mountainous Roufaa,' but alas! our young friend Sheikh Mohamed was out, for he had to be in attendance on his uncle, Sheikh Esau, who had just arrived at his tent near our encampment, and he had to provide all his uncle's meals; and we saw a donkey with a cauldron on its back large enough to boil a sheep in, large copper trays and many other articles despatched for the delectation of the sovereign and his retinue. Sheikh Mohamed's mother, quite a queenly-looking woman, was busying herself about the preparation of these things, and when she had finished she invited us to go into the harem. I felt the honour and confidence reposed in me exceedingly, but, alas! all the women were veiled, all I could contemplate was their lovely hands and feet dyed yellow with henna, their rich red skirts, their aprons adorned with coins, their gold bracelets and turquoise rings; my wife assured me that with one solitary exception I had no loss in not seeing their faces. In one corner of the women's room was the biggest bed I ever saw; it had eight posts, a roof, a fence, a gate and steps up to it; it is a sort of dais, in fact, where they spread their rugs and sleep.

Half-way between the two Roufaas we halted at a well, the great point of concourse for the inhabitants of both villages. It was evening, and around it were gathered crowds of the most enchanting people in every possible costume; women and donkeys were groaning under the weight of skins filled with water; men were engaged in filling them, but it seems against the dignity of a male Arab to carry anything. With the regularity of a steamer crane, the well creaked and groaned as the donkeys toiled up and down their slope, bringing to the surface the skins of water. It was a truly Arab sight, with the desert all around us, and the little garden hard by which Sheikh Saba cultivates with infinite toil, having a weary contest with the surrounding sand which invades his enclosure.

The sun was getting low when we returned to our bare room at Sheikh Khallet's, and to our great contentment we were left alone, for our day had been a busy one, and a strain on our con-

versational powers. Our host handed us over to the tender mercies of a black slave, Zamzam by name, wonderfully skilled at cooking with a handful of charcoal on circular pots coloured red, and bearing a marked resemblance to the altars of the Parsee fire-worshippers; he brought us in our dinner: first he spread a large round mat of fine grass on the floor, in the centre of this he deposited a washing basin filled with boiled rice and a bowl of *ghee* or rancid grease to make it palatable; before us were placed two tough chickens, a bowl of dates, and for drink we had a bowl of milk with delicious fresh butter floating in it. Several sheets of bread about the size and consistency of bath towels were also provided, but no utensils of any kind to assist us in conveying these delicacies to our mouths. With pieces of bread we scooped up the rice, with our fingers we managed the rest, and we were glad no one was looking on to witness our struggles save Zamzam with a ewer of water with which he washed us after the repast was over, and then we put ourselves away for the night.

Very early next morning we were on the move for our trip across the island; the journey would be too long for donkeys, they said, so Sheikh Khallet mounted us on three of his best camels, with lovely saddles of inlaid El Hasa work. We, that is to say my wife and I and the Bazaar-master, ambled along at a pretty smart pace across the desert in the direction of a fishing village called Asker, on the east coast of the island, near which were said to exist ancient remains; these of course turned out to be myths, but the village was all that could be desired in quaintness: the houses were all of bamboo, in one of which we were regaled with coffee, and found it delicious after our hot ride; then we strolled along the shore and marvelled at the bamboo skiffs, the curiously-fashioned oars and water casks, the stone anchors, and other primitive implements used by this seafaring race. The Bazaar-master would not let us tarry as long as we could have wished, for he was anxious for us to arrive before the midday heat at a rocky cave in the 'mountain of mist,' in the centre of the island. Here, in delicious coolness, yet another Sheikh of the El Kaleefah family was introduced to us, by name Abdullah; he owns the land about here, and having been advised of our coming, had prepared a repast for us, much on the lines of the one we had had the evening before. From the gentle elevation of the misty mountain one gets a very fair idea of the extent and character of Bahrein; it looked to us anything but silvery, but for all the

world as like one of their own sheets of bread—oval and tawny. It is said to be twenty-seven miles long and twelve wide at its broadest point. From the clearness of the atmosphere and the distinctness with which we saw the sea all around us, it could not have been much more. There are many tiny villages dotted about here and there, recognisable only by their nest of palm-trees and their strips of verdure. In the dim distance, to our left, arose the mountains of Arabia, beyond the flat coast line of El Hasa encircling that wild, mysterious land of Nejd, where the Wahabee dwell,—a land forbidden to the infidel globetrotter.

We much enjoyed our cool rest and repast in Abdullah's cave, and for two hours or more our whole party lay stretched on the ground courting slumber, whilst our camels grazed around. The Sheikh was anxious to take us to his house for the night, but we could not remain, as our work demanded our return to our camp that night, so we compromised matters by taking coffee with him on a green oasis near his house, under a blazing sun, without an atom of shade, and without a thing against which to lean our tired backs. Then we hurried back to Roufaa, took leave of our friends, and started off late in the evening for our home.

Soon we came in sight of Sheikh Esau's tent; his majesty was evidently expecting us, for by his side in the royal tent were placed two high thrones covered with sheepskins for us to sit upon, whilst his Arabian majesty and his courtiers sat in a long loop which extended for some yards outside the tent. Here were all his nephews and cousins assembled. That gay boy Sheikh Mohamed, on ordinary occasions as full of fun as an English schoolboy, sat there in great solemnity, incapable of a smile though I maliciously tried to raise one. When he came next morning to visit us he was equally solemn, until his uncle had left our tent; then his gaiety returned as if by magic, and with it his covetousness for my pistol. Eventually an exchange was effected, he producing a coffee-pot and an inlaid bowl which had taken our fancy as the price.

Two days later our camp was struck, and our long cavalcade, with Saed Ben Omar, the Bazaar-master, at its head, returned to Manamah. He had ordered for us quite a sumptuous repast at his mansion by the sea, and having learnt our taste for curiosities he brought us as presents a buckler of camel's skin, his eight-foot long lance, and a lovely bowl of El Hasa work,—that is to say, minute particles of silver inlaid in wonderful patterns in wood; it

is quite a distinctive art of the district of Arabia along the north-eastern coast known as El Hasa ; curious old guns, saddles, bowls, and coffee-pots, in fact everything with an artistic tendency, coming from that country.

The day following was the great Thursday's market at Beled-al-Kedim, near the old minarets and the wells. Mounted once more on donkeys, we joined the train of peasants thither bound, my wife being as usual the object of much criticism, and greatly interfering with the business of the day. One male starrer paid for his inquisitiveness by tumbling over a stall of knick-knacks and precipitating himself and all the contents on the ground.

The minarets and pillars of the old mosques looked down on a strange scene that day. In the half-ruined domed houses of the departed race, stall-holders had pitched their stalls, lanes and cross lanes of closely-packed vendors of quaint crockery, newly-cut lucerne, onions, fish, and objects of European fabric such as only Orientals admire, formed a compact mass of struggling humanity ; but it was easy to see that the date-palm and her produce formed the staple trade of the place. There were all shapes and sizes of baskets made of palm-leaves, dates in profusion, fuel of the dried spathes, and vendors of the male spathes for fructifying the palm, and palm-leaf matting,—the only furniture, and sometimes the only roofing of their comfortless huts.

The costumes were dazzling in their brilliancy and quaintness. It was a scene never to be forgotten, and one of which our photograph, taken from a gentle eminence, gives but a faint idea. It was our last scene on Bahrein, a fitting conclusion to our sojourn thereon.

### *FISTICUFFS IN FICTION.*

THE sentiment of Lucretius as to the delight of witnessing a violent tempest from some place of shelter has been often quoted with appreciation of its selfish spirit of philosophy. Somewhat akin to it is the feeling by force of which the most peaceably disposed amongst us, amid the security of our own surroundings, are not averse to hearing the details of a fight. Scenes descriptive of any personal encounter, especially of the pugilistic sort, are apt to have an unusual attraction, even when occurring in the shadowy realms of fiction.

Who has not experienced a thrill of enjoyment when Mr. Tupman, under the threefold aggravation of having been called 'old,' and 'fat,' and 'a fellow' by his too hasty chief, proceeds to tuck up his wristbands with the regretful though determinedly expressed resolve to inflict vengeance on Mr. Pickwick's venerated person? And is not the thrill followed by a glow of positive rapture when that heroic man, not to be outdone, throws himself into a 'paralytic attitude' with the ready response, 'Come on, sir!' Nor is it altogether to our satisfaction (though we would not have had it otherwise) that the contest, thus happily introduced, is checked before a blow is struck by the somewhat impertinent interference of Mr. Snodgrass, who, at the imminent risk of damage to his own temples, rushes between the belligerents and recalls them to a sense of the dignity they had for a moment lost sight of. A similar interest attends on Mr. Pickwick's adventure with the cabman into whose business, with his customary genial inquisitiveness, he had attempted to pry. With what exhilarating effect on his calmly unconscious mood comes the sudden bellicose manifestation of the outraged Jehu, when, flinging his fare on the pavement, he offers to fight Mr. Pickwick for the amount, following up the proposal with 'one' on that gentleman's eye, another on his nose, and a third on his chest (Mr. Snodgrass, who on this occasion had signally failed in his attempts at conciliation, coming in—together with the rest of the Pickwickians—for something on his own account)—all, and a great deal more, in half-a-dozen seconds.

Of equally delightful suddenness in the manner of its coming

off was Pip's affair with the 'pale young gentleman' in 'Great Expectations.' The spirits rise to the startling abruptness of the challenge when, after their unceremonious exchange of greeting in Miss Havisham's garden, 'Come and fight,' says 'the pale young gentleman,' at once proceeding to give the bewildered Pip 'a reason for fighting' (as he put it) by clapping his hands violently together, pulling Pip's hair, and butting his head into his stomach—a particularly unpleasant manoeuvre considering that Pip had just been dining. The eye follows him as if fascinated as he dances wildly to and fro, skipping from one leg to the other in accordance with the 'laws of the game,' divests himself of the greater part of his attire with an air at once 'light-hearted, businesslike, and bloodthirsty,' and gives Pip the greatest surprise of his life by going down like a ninepin at the first blow, looking up with an ensanguined countenance at his amazed antagonist, who had expected nothing less than annihilation from his previous show of dexterity. And when, after some dozen rounds or so, during the course of which he never once hits hard, is invariably knocked down, is always up again in a moment, and finally spins round, drops on his knees and throws up the sponge, panting out, 'That means you have won,' the touch of pathos that steals in upon our mirth imparts to it a peculiar charm.

'There is something peculiarly hostile,' says Bulwer Lytton, 'in the relationship between boy and boy when their backs are once up and they are alone on a quiet bit of green'—the remark leading to the description of the fight, in 'My Novel,' between the country lout, young Leonard, and Randal Leslie, Etonian, beside the Squire's new stocks, and on which considerably more ill-will was brought to bear than on that so lightly carried on by Master Herbert Pocket. Lenny, as may be remembered, was mounting guard over the village ornament (by order of the Squire's factotum) when Randal, bruised and shaken by a recent fall into a ditch, drew near and, all innocent of offence (in this particular at least), seated himself on the by no means formidable-looking structure. Lenny, in pursuance, as he thinks, of his duty, remonstrates in no very conciliatory manner, and the next moment the boys are at it hammer-and-tongs. After the first blind onslaught, the heavy blundering blows of young Rusticus come in nowhere against the Etonian's swift effective strokes, and he is soon left bruised and bleeding on the field, the still wrathful victor flinging him a half-crown in compensation for his injuries.



Of a fuller flavour is the account of the combat between one of Bulwer's later heroes, Kenelm Chillingly, and the fear-inspiring, if radically good-hearted, bully of the neighbourhood, Tom Bowles. 'Providence,' says the serious-minded Kenelm, without a thought of irreverence, 'sent me to this village for the express purpose of licking Tom Bowles.' And his manner of accomplishing this purpose is full of sweet surprises. Lightly parrying blows that might have felled an ox, he inflicts a few playful taps on nose and mouth in return; gets Tom's head into a mill, and, instead of pounding it after approved fashion out of all recognisable shape, lets it go unscathed with the apologetic remark to the onlookers, 'He has a handsome face; it would be a shame to spoil it'—a method of treatment that goads the unappreciative Tom to frenzy; when, all at once, the other brings his trained skill to bear on the untutored strength of his opponent, and, roused to the necessity of checking the blows that sound on his chest 'as on an anvil,' lets out in earnest. At the first blow, 'crash between the eyes,' Tom reels and staggers; at the second, he throws up his hands, jumps into the air as if shot, and falls heavily forward; on which satisfactory result the victor turns, with admirable *sang-froid*, yet humbly withal, and as if in deprecation of their horror, to the crowd and assures them that if Tom had been 'a less magnificent creature' he would never have ventured the second blow. 'The first would have done for any man less splendidly endowed by nature'—a compliment unfortunately thrown away on its unconscious object, who, in compliance with his conqueror's commands, is tenderly lifted up and carried home to his mother.

The tone of muscular Christianity about this combat recalls the figure, familiar to novel readers, of the fighting parson who is as ready to thrash the black sheep of his flock as to baptise its lambs, and through this all-round power of ministry ends by reclaiming the whole parish from its evil ways into the paths of righteousness and peace. No such benevolent spirit is present in the encounter that forms so prominent a feature in novels of the Guy Livingstone type. When the hero of this school stands forth in the impromptu ring, in all the pride of his glorious young manhood, his muscles standing out like whipcord, his 'Norman blood' in full tide, we know by the 'evil light' in his eyes, the 'stern and pitiless' set of his mouth, that there is a bad time coming for his opponent. Nor is the expectation disappointed, though the Game Chicken, Bendigo Bill, the Big



'Un, or whatever his attractive designation may be—a bullet-headed, iron-fisted champion of the ring, with a ferocious grin of anticipation on his face—appears the very incarnation of brute force. The hero's 'fatal left' is sure to 'swing out,' in its accustomed deadly fashion, with the rapidity and precision of a rifle-ball; the final smashing blow from the right is sure to fall once—if not twice—with a 'dull sickening thud' that is 'bad to hear,' and the victim, for all his sledge-hammer blows and bull-like rushes, will inevitably drop at his victor's feet, from the height to which, as a finishing-touch, he has been whirled, a heap of 'blind, senseless, bleeding humanity.'

There is a fight of a yet grimmer type wherein, though the flavour of the shambles may be missing, we have the more than equivalent sensation of the bearlike hug, in which body and bones are like to be crushed into one coagulated mass. The aggressor in this case is most probably a burly garotter, steeped to the lips in deeds of crime and violence, and with a previous grudge against his 'murdered man' (as in anticipation he fondly deems him), some delicate-handed, immaculately got-up aristocrat. But the tables are turned on him in the most unexpected manner. His first vigorous onslaught having been coolly put aside, to his mingled astonishment and horror he finds himself clasped in an embrace from which it is as impossible to get free as it would be from the encircling folds of a boa. His struggles are vain, the grasp still tightens, and he gasps for air, while his tormentor looks calmly down upon him, his brow untroubled, his hue unchanged, his breath coming no quicker than if it were his partner in the dance he was thus clasping to him; and perchance a gleam of amusement in his cold bright eyes. The garotter has caught a tartar this time, and lucky for him if that merciless grip relaxes before it be too late, and he is allowed to sneak off in the gloaming a sadder and a sorer man.

Another of these surprise-fights is that of which the hero is some slender, golden-haired Adonis who disguises his herculean strength beneath a semblance of almost feminine mildness, whose soft blue eyes seem made but for the glance of love, whose hand might be a woman's envy (the white hand, by the way, seems to be a *sine quâ non* in these encounters), in whose voice there is a pathetic tone or else a lazy drawl—unless it be an infantine lisp. We all know by experience how ill it fares with the unhappy wretch who, beguiled by his harmless exterior, may chance to

rouse the ire of this languid being. A startling metamorphosis is apt to ensue. Up leaps the devil into those sleepy eyes; the fingers that were wont to stray so listlessly through their owner's curly locks form themselves into a fist under which the unwary one goes down like a log; and the gentle-seeming fraud stands revealed a veritable 'terror:' as bad in his way as that personage dear to the American humorist—the small mild-looking 'stranger' out West, who, strolling in an absent-minded manner past some rowdy saloon, unwittingly gets into trouble with the biggest man in the crowd, and, after meekly, but vainly, protesting his innocence of offence, ends by 'mopping the sidewalk' with him, in the suddenly revealed character of a professor of pugilism.

In these fictitious fights it is not always the man of humble birth that gets smashed by the patrician. Occasionally we are treated to a victory on the other side; and it cannot be denied that there is a zest of its own in the situation when the gallant captain or the trim civilian falls prone beneath the well-planted blow of one of the grimy-handed sons of toil, who, yielding to an impulse of righteous wrath (for the wrath in this case is generally righteous), thus takes vengeance for some injury wrought on him or his. Little pity is felt for the prostrate sinner as he sprawls in the mud, his shirt-front 'steeped in gore,' his smooth face 'one mask of bruises,' by which tokens we may safely infer that it will be many a long day before he can lord it around him with his usual swagger. In the melodramatic scene amongst the beech-trees in the twilight between Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede, it was Arthur that went down before the workman's brawny arm. Ladies have their own way of managing these things. Few will have forgotten how eager Adam was for the fight with his slippery rival; how tenderly solicitous over him when his longed-for blow had taken effect; and how like a sick fractious child Arthur behaved after his punishment, finally using the arm which had thrown him to support his shattered frame on the way home.

A woman is supposed to be a prime instigator in every mischief: she certainly forms an important element in the fight in fiction, whether innocently or of malice prepense. Many of these belligerent scenes would lack their crowning charm without the feminine business in the background—the agonised sobs, the wringing of hands, the supplicatory appeals of the gentle, timid maiden; or else the self-satisfied smile of the selfish beauty,

glorying in her power, though it be for evil, over the masculine species. The fight takes on a more perilous aspect when there is no spectator—if one may except the moon, who, from time immemorial, has appeared as interested in these proceedings as in lovers' meetings, and who looks down with cold dispassionate gaze on the dear struggle for life; for in these lonely contests—on barren heath or rocky shore—it generally means nothing less. If the encounter takes place on the side of a precipice (a favourite situation—that is, with the author), so much the better for the effect. The villain of the occasion has an awkward knack of working his reluctant adversary nearer and nearer, inch by inch, toward the edge of the yawning abyss, and ends by precipitating him over, going about with an uneasy conscience ever after, till the Abel of his dreams turns up to confront him at the most momentous crisis of his life: for things seldom turn out so badly as they might have done in these fights. Fiction here is sometimes stranger than truth.

The fight is dying out of fiction; if we except those hand-to-hand encounters between white man and savage, with which we have been regaled of late, and which take place a very long way from home. On the rare occasions in which the exigencies of plot may still force a fight upon the novelist, the affair is slurred over in a perfunctory style, with nothing of that gusto of detail that animated his predecessor. Whether or not a worse element has crept into his (or her) pages may be a doubtful question.

## *SISTER ROSE GERTRUDE.*

### PREFATORY NOTE.

SISTER ROSE GERTRUDE, who has sailed to be the Superior of the Lepers' Hospital at Kalawao, on the Island of Molokai, the home of the late Father Damien, is the daughter of the Vicar of Combe Down, sometime chaplain of the Union and H.M. prison at Bath.

A member of the Roman Catholic Church, and of one of its 'nursing' sisterhoods, she feels that 'suffering is her vow and her profession.' 'Love which cannot suffer is unworthy of the name of love.'

For years past it has been her desire to go forth and tend the lepers in their lonely island home, and she has equipped herself for the work by study in the hospitals and at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

'It had always been,' she said to a lady who interviewed her on the eve of her departure, 'my wish and my desire to do some of God's work on earth into which I could throw my whole being, where there was scope for the fullest self-sacrifice, and where I could follow Him who said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."'

She handed shyly a little old prayer-book to the lady, and continued:

'I don't know whether I ought to tell you, but unless I do I shall not have explained one of the reasons of my great wish to go, and live with, and help the lepers.'

In Miss Fowler's small, clear handwriting, a prayer was written on the leaf—the touching, pathetic prayer which is said to have been found on the chest of the Prince Imperial when he was carried dead from the battle-field in Zululand.

Miss Fowler pointed to the passage: 'If Thou only givest on this earth a certain sum of happiness, take, O God! my share and bestow it on the most worthy . . . . If Thou seekest vengeance on man, strike me!'

If, Lord, Thy hand to each a sum doth give  
Of joy, take mine to be on others shed.  
And if Thou seekest vengeance, strike me dead  
So others live.

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Sister Rose with the clear blue eye,  
And the Dominic dress, and the milk-white hood,  
You have long resolved: you have crossed the flood;  
You have out-faced death, and the leper's ban,  
For the glory of God and the love of man;  
At least, you can never die.

It is true you sat in your sombre gown  
And waved a hand to the twilit shore;  
It is true, when the funnels began to roar  
And the stern to lash in the Mersey tide,  
You looked back over the vessel's side  
And thought of the Combe and the Down.

But your soul had long ago crossed the seas  
To the tall dark cliffs with their ladders of sun,  
To the beach where the pitiless breakers run,  
Where the lepers wail on the prisoning strand,  
And the Christ alone with His loving hand  
Can lessen the sore disease.

Sister Rose, there the roses glow,  
The wild convolvulus shines like fire,  
The air is as soft as heart can desire,  
The honey-bird gleams, and the fern-trees wave,  
But the ocean moans round an island grave,  
And death is above and below.

Sister Rose, you will land in a bay  
Where like jewels the fish will swim or sleep;  
But the shark's fierce fin sails out of the deep.  
Fair is the noon, but all night in the south  
The dread volcano flames from its mouth  
Anguish and sore dismay.

One can bear to sit down by a corpse awhile,  
To see the face-cloth drawn from a face  
Which has won from death a renewal of grace;  
But how will it be when the face that is death  
Still breathes and heaves through its knots with breath  
And counterfeits still a smile?

One can wait and watch by a coffin, when  
The lid is closed, and the cry unheard;  
But what if the dead man called or stirred?  
And what if the pain of our agony  
Were to tend the dead, and to hear the cry  
Of the still uncoffined men?

One can love and pity the wounded and weak,  
The mangled body whose face is whole,  
Whose eyes look forth with the look of a soul;  
But ah, when the body has ceased to be  
The thing God made it, no eyes to see,  
No ears, and no lips to speak!

Sister Rose, when saw you the Lord?  
Did you gaze at Him coming from off the hill  
When the leper cried, and He said, 'I will:  
Be clean!' Or when did the angels meet  
And strew the lilies about your feet,  
And press your hands to the sword?

Sword of the spirit and lilies of life,  
Flower of the heart and weapon of fire,  
Tender and keen with the soul's desire  
To dare this deed, and to face disease  
With the flush of your health; in the Southern Seas  
To be unto Death for wife.

When you were a child did the angels come,  
That day that you gave your cowslip ball  
To the crippled boy? Did you hear the call  
When the birds were crying about their nest  
In the copse, and you carried with beating breast  
The wounded pigeon home?

When your life with the birds and the flowers was filled,  
With the sun and the dew of the Somerset lane,  
Did you go to the prisoner's house of pain,  
Or take your little white heart of pity  
Into the grim and the sorrowing city,  
And feel that God's will had willed?

Had you read of Siena's Saint and the dove  
That hovered above the maiden's head?  
Or of her who, giving the leper a bed,  
Found Christ? Or of him who learned to die  
That the dying might live at Molokai,  
That thus you are sworn to Love?

Or was it a faded leaf with a prayer,  
They found on a fallen soldier's breast,  
Which has sent you forth on your holy quest  
To beat down death, and if God must give  
The blow, to bear it, so brothers may live,  
And sisters your sunlight share?

It matters little: the angels came,  
Passed through the streets of the troubled town  
To the quiet village beneath the Down;  
They touched your soul and they opened your eyes,  
They fired an altar of sacrifice  
And cast your heart in the flame.

And ever since then your grey hills gleamed  
As grey as the native hills He knew,  
Who loved his friends to the death, and drew  
The whole world after: yea, yonder mill,  
With its arms outstretched on the top of the hill,  
Like a cross in the darkness seemed.

Sister Rose Gertrude, the Gates of Heaven  
Are open for you; and your heart that was small  
Is wide to embrace the world at the call  
Of Love at the gates. Let England prove  
At the height of its power, its power to love:  
To you is the high task given.



## MARIE.

## CHAPTER I.

SOME years ago I, with my half-reluctant husband, went down to the Isle of Wight to pay a visit to one of the oldest and dearest of my friends, Mrs. Calhoun.

Two or three days after my arrival we were sitting together in the evening under the verandah which goes round two sides of Marine Villa, the house Mrs. Calhoun had taken for the season. We had dined, and our two husbands had, in masculine fashion, gone off to the club to find the amusement men never seem able to dispense with, and we were quite content to sip our coffee alone together. It was at the beginning of August, and the day had been extremely hot. It was very pleasant to sit out of doors and feel the cool evening air. Pleasant to me, then fresh from London, was the view of the garden, the big trees, the flowers, the lawn sloping down to the water's edge. Away at sea two yachts could be indistinctly seen in the gathering twilight, and right before us Mrs. Calhoun's youngest child, a boy between four and five years old, was running about the garden with his nurse and chattering to her volubly in French. Mrs. Calhoun was looking on with maternal pride, watching the little fellow's gambols, listening, with a smile, to his artless prattle with his nurse. Soon it was time for him to go to bed, and he came up to give his mother his good-night kiss. Then, for the first time, I noticed the nurse particularly. She was a woman of about twenty-five, tall and very handsome. Her features were large but regular; her hair was of the deepest black, and twisted in large masses round her well-shaped head. Her eyes were dark, and as she turned them for a moment on me, I was almost startled by the strange, mournful look they had. There was something, too, in the woman's attitude that struck me as she stood waiting for her charge, looking at him, but not smiling, her head a little drooping, her hands clasped across her bosom.

When they were both gone I turned to my friend impatiently.

'What banished princess or queen have you got as nurse for your little boy?' I cried.

'You think Marie looks sad?' she replied.

'Sad! There is more than sadness in her look—there is

dignity grown weary, and pride changing to resignation. Lady Macbeth might have looked like that if she had repented of her crimes.'

'You see a good deal in poor Marie's face,' said my friend. 'She is a very good nurse, and devoted to Bertie. Even I hardly love him more. But it is true she has a story.'

'Ah!' I said, 'I can guess it. Marie was the village belle somewhere in her country of France. But she was proud, and rejected the homage of her rustic admirers. Then came the seductive stranger—she loved—she was tempted—she fell—she was betrayed. She left her native village never to return, and hid her shame among strangers. That was years ago; but she has never got over it, and never will. Somewhere or other, perhaps, there is a child that can bear no father's name.'

Mrs. Calhoun did not reply at first. Then she said:

'You are quite wrong, entirely wrong. I think the sort of thing you describe happens more often in books than in real life. However that may be, it doesn't concern Marie—she has nothing to blush for. There is no reason why you shouldn't know her story. But first get something to throw over your shoulders, for I may be some time before I have finished, and it is beginning to be a little cool.'

When this had been arranged Mrs. Calhoun began:

'It was at Lausanne, or rather at Ouchy, that I first saw Marie. We had a little villa on the lake not far from the Hôtel Beau-Rivage, and it was there that Bertie was born. It was necessary that some one should be found to bring him up, and it was no easy task to find the right sort of person, for the doctor was very particular, and a great many peasant women came and were sent away again. But at last he found one in every way suitable, and that was Marie. The girl was herself very reluctant to leave her own infant, but the high wages we offered tempted the husband and he persuaded her. Marie hadn't then the sad and melancholy expression you noticed just now; though she was not one of those persons who are for ever laughing and talking, she was always cheerful and good-tempered. I daresay she used to shed a few tears about her own baby, whom she used to see once a week; but if she did, I didn't see them, and I'm sure she was, on the whole, very happy. Otherwise, you know—the doctor was very particular.

'When I got a little better I used to talk a good deal with

Marie, and bit by bit I got from her her whole history. There was not much to tell. Her father had been a peasant, not very far from Lausanne. He was a widower, and Marie was his only child. Once he had been pretty well off, but times had changed, and he had to sell little bits of his land to keep himself afloat. When Marie was about fifteen he died, leaving her everything he had. But that wasn't much when all outstanding debts were paid, and Marie's *dot* was accordingly only a small one. You guessed just now that Marie was the belle of her village. I have no doubt she was, for Swiss girls are not, as a rule, very beautiful, and I fancy there were not many girls of her class for leagues round as fine-looking as she was, and is. But the rural wooers of those parts do not think very much about beauty when they are choosing a wife. Money is more important. Our Belgravian papas and mammas might smile approvingly on the prudence with which these horny-handed peasants manage their matrimonial arrangements. And all the eligible suitors round about Marie's village knew exactly how many five-franc pieces she had in her *dot*, and turned their attention to girls of coarse complexion but well-to-do parents. Marie was then living with an aunt, a widow, not very well off. This aunt was disgusted that her brother had not left his daughter better provided for, and used to prophesy that the poor girl would have to *coiffer Sainte Catherine*; but Marie was not much more than nineteen when a suitor did come forward, and one whom the aunt thought decidedly eligible. I think it was really a love-match, for the man could easily have found a wealthier bride. He was a native of a neighbouring village, but had been away from his home for some time. He had been a waiter—chiefly, I think, in London. At any rate, he spoke English fluently. Marie, I think, liked him from the first. He had a great deal to talk about—stories of foreign countries, of Paris, of London; tales of sights and scenes that might easily dazzle the village girl.

‘But the course of his wooing was not at first very successful. His parents objected strongly; they had chosen a more suitable wife for him. But he was faithful; he would marry the girl of his choice and settle down in the neighbourhood, or he would go back to London and forsake the Pays de Vaud for ever. His parents were very averse to this also. He got them finally to give their consent to his marriage, and to give it in a friendly and ungrudging manner. I think Marie's heart was really touched by the man's constancy, and that there was plenty of love on both sides.

when the wedding was celebrated and she became Mme. Poteau. At any rate, I am sure she loved her husband very sincerely when she first came to nurse my little Bertie. She never spoke of her own feelings, but it was easy to see that she was proud of her husband, of his cleverness and his knowledge, and that she was happy in the thought of his constant kindness, and that altogether the *ménage* was a very happy one. He had, a little before the wedding, bought a *café* at Morges. You may remember that is on the lake between Lausanne and Geneva. This purchase swallowed up all his savings, and he had to borrow a little money from his father. All Marie's *dot* was expended in carrying out some alterations which he had made and in providing some extra furniture. And the only trouble of their married life was that the *café* didn't at first pay, or didn't pay as well as had been expected. M. Poteau was hopeful, and certain that it would ultimately be a great success, but for the present he was short of money, and his father either couldn't or wouldn't advance him any. Then his baby was born, and soon after Marie came to be with me. That was his idea, as I have said. He had schemed it all out, and saw his way to continue the improvements he wanted made at his *café*. A certain sum was to be borrowed to be repaid in monthly instalments. Marie's wages were to pay these sums, and so the whole affair was settled. He used to come over and see his wife every week, and sometimes his mother would come with him and bring the baby, a rosy, healthy-looking little fellow. I saw M. Poteau several times, and spoke to him once or twice. He was a neat, dapper little man with sharp eyes, quick in his movements and voluble of speech. He was extremely deferential in his manner to me, thanking me profusely for my "most remarkable kindness to his wife." At the same time he somehow contrived to let me understand that he was sorry she had to leave her home, and that by-and-by circumstances would be very different with them—very different, indeed. Then the time came when we left Ouchy, and Marie had to say good-bye to her husband and her baby. Her husband, poor man, seemed really quite distressed—you see they had not been married very long—but he assured me that he had been careful not to let Marie see him in his downcast condition. "I kept it up before her," he said. "She mustn't be worried about anything, I know."

Marie herself was not so doleful as I expected. The prospect of travelling, I think, kept her spirits up. She had never been

even so far as Geneva before, and now she was delighted to count over the number of kilomètres she would go. And she was enchanted with Paris, where we made a long stay; the shops, the animation of the streets, of the boulevards, were so novel, so fresh to the dweller in the Pays de Vaud, and she was especially fond of the gardens—the Tuileries and the Luxembourg—where there were so many of her profession with their long streamers always perambulating about. And then we crossed to England at this time, and Marie was uniformly cheerful and contented. She had a great many letters from her husband, always giving the best of news. The alterations at the *café* were finished, and people were beginning to come in. They would find out how comfortable it was, and how all the *consommations* were of the best! And at first there was a great deal about the baby. By-and-by the news came down to a simple announcement that he was quite well. She always read me these letters, though there were parts, I fancy, very strictly personal, which she did not read. I think she wrote to complain that so little was said about the dear baby. The remonstrance, if it was really made, had some effect, though not much. There was a paragraph in the next letter saying that baby had been very good and hadn't cried at all, and then that he had grown and was rosy and getting fat; but generally there was only a brief statement that all was well—"Bébé va bien;" "Bébé se trouve à merveille," and the like. So the time came round when Marie was to return home, and though even then she was not very demonstrative, I could see with what delight she was looking forward to the meeting with her baby and her husband. "Mon bébé et mon mari"—that was her cry. But she was distressed at the thought of leaving Bertie, and when she did say good-bye to him she broke down and cried. She went away rather suddenly at the last, for some other foreign nurse, whom she had got to know when walking in Kensington Gardens, was going back, and she could have her company as far as Pontarlier. So she left two days before the time she had fixed on, and sent a telegram to her husband to tell him of her change of plans. On the morning she went away a letter arrived from Morges for my husband, who was then in Leicestershire hunting. I thought it was from M. Poteau, and showed it to Marie, who recognised the handwriting. I thought of opening it, but Herbert is a little fussy sometimes about these things, and I didn't think there could be anything which would concern Marie's journey or he would have

written to her. So she started tearful, smiling, immensely grateful for the little present I had made her, and begging me to let her hear about Bertie now and then.

‘When my husband came back and read the letter, which was, as we supposed, from M. Poteau, he asked if nurse had actually gone, and was then quite disturbed when he found she had. But he would not tell me why. He thinks worry is bad for me, and doesn’t understand our sex well enough to know that the worry of unsatisfied curiosity is one of the worst we have. On the morning of the fourth day after that I was startled in my dressing by the message—“Nurse has come back and wants to see you.”

‘When I went down Marie was there, looking very pale and with swollen eyes, which told of nights passed without sleep. The new nurse had brought down the baby to show her. She came forward as I entered the room, and burst into wild supplicating speech.

“Take me back, madame! take me back, dear madame! Let me live with you and with the dear baby! Let me be his nurse always!”

“Marie!” I said, “what is this? Has your husband——”

‘Her eyes blazed out into sudden fury.

“My husband is a villain and a liar. He has cheated me and betrayed me. I will never see him again if I can help it—never! never!”

‘Just then Bertie began to cry, and she turned to him. He put out his little pudgy hands to her.

“See!” she cried triumphantly, “he knows me, he is fond of me! He wants me—let me stop with him, dear, dear madame. He is all I have in the world now.”

At this point my friend’s narrative was interrupted by the return of our husbands. They had found nothing going on in the club—wouldn’t we come in the drawing-room and give them some music? We complied with wifely obedience, and sang a duet, during which they yawned with marital indifference. Then they thought they would go out again and smoke a cigar in the garden, or—they might stroll down to the pier.

When they were gone I begged Mrs. Calhoun to resume her narrative.

## CHAPTER II.

‘M. POTEAU’s letter to my husband,’ she went on, ‘is the quickest solution to what I see you are finding rather enigmatic. In this letter M. Poteau communicated a sad piece of intelligence. Their baby was dead—had been dead for more than three months. He had kept back the news from his wife, knowing how dreadfully distressed she would be, and fearing the consequences. One possible consequence he stated with perfect simplicity. And if Marie was no longer of use as a nurse, if she had to return home before the time, if the remittance came to an end, all his plans would be deranged. So he had kept back the sad tidings, and sent false news of the baby being well and having grown, and so on. And at last he had written to my husband to beg him to get me to let Marie know the real state of the case. I would break the news to her gently (would I not?), and explain that he had acted for the best.

‘Well, that was his letter. On the other side there was Marie almost crushed by the death of her little boy, and yet furious against her husband for having deceived her. She had his letters, and she showed me the passages—“Bébé va bien; bébé est à merveille.”

“And all the while he was dead, and I never knew it!” she cried out. “Guess, madame, how I felt when I got home. All the journey I was thinking of my poor innocent, and I was so happy expecting to see him again. I wondered if he was much changed, if he was grown. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how I thought about the *pauvre petit!* Then, when my husband met me at the station and kissed me, cheerful and smiling, just as if he had not been deceiving me all along, the first thing I asked him was why baby was not there at the station too. I don’t know what he said, I was in such a hurry to get home and see my child. Then, when I got to the house, I found his father and his mother there, *tout endimanchés*, madame, and the table set out for a feast—they were going to make a *fête* to celebrate my return. *Mon Dieu! une fête!* Yes, madame, I was to be told that my dear baby was dead, and then I was to sit down and eat and drink with him and his father and mother, who always hated me.

“When I got into the house I asked at once, ‘Where’s baby?’ and no one of the three would answer. They stood



looking at each other and at me. 'Where's my baby?' I called out again. And still no one said anything. Then I knew there was something wrong, and I cried out, 'Oh, he is ill, I know, and you won't tell me! Tell me where he is at once—at once.'

"I was furious, madame, and I rushed upstairs to look for him, and there was his little cradle, empty. Empty, with the clothes folded neatly. Madame, I shall never forget how I felt when I saw that. I did not weep or cry out. I went downstairs again where the three were, and walked right to my husband, and said, 'You have sent my baby away. Where is he?' And he didn't speak a word, but looked at his mother, who didn't speak either. Then I guessed the whole truth, and I cried out, 'He is dead! I know it!' And my husband said, 'Yes, he has been dead three months.' And then they all began to speak together, but I didn't hear a word they were saying. Those words, 'dead three months,' seemed to go round and round in my head and prevent me from hearing anything else. I don't know how long I stood there like that; only when my husband came forward and took me by the hand I knew where I was and what I had to do. I started away, and I told him that he was a villain, that I would never be his wife any more, that I would never eat his bread—never, if I could help it, see him again. And I took off my wedding-ring and threw it down on the ground before him, and the last month's wages with it. Only *le cadeau de madame*—that I kept so that I might be able to come back."

'That was Marie's story, told me two days after she came back, and I need not say how I felt for her—we are mothers too.

'But what was I to do? I tried to calm the poor woman, to give her good advice. I told her that a wife's place was always and for ever with her husband; that nothing but the worst wrongdoing could set her free from that duty; that she couldn't at her own will cancel the bond between them; that she ought to be forgiving, and so on.

'To all this she hardly listened. "He deceived me," she said only; "he let my baby die, and wrote me lies. I will never trust him again." There was no moving her from that. And when I represented that I had no need for her services, that I had a nurse and couldn't send her away without some reason, she cried and implored me to let her stop with her dear child.

"He is all I have in the world now."

'She repeated that several times.

'Before many days the new nurse gave me notice, and said she wished to leave at once. I believe there was some arrangement between her and Marie, though I never knew. However, I told Marie that she might stop with me a month or so, and that at the end of that time I hoped she would be in a better frame of mind and be willing to go back to her husband. And so she came, and she has been with me ever since.'

Mrs. Calhoun paused.

'Is that where the story stops?' I asked.

'That is nearly all, but not quite,' she went on. 'After she had been with me about two months she told me something which at first rather startled me. It was in the nursery; we had been talking for some time of Bertie, who was not quite well, when she suddenly said:

"Madame, I have seen him. He is here, in London."

"You mean your husband?" I said.

"Yes, madame. I saw him in the Park to-day, and he tried to speak to me, but I would not hear. I walked past as if he had not been there."

'A few days after M. Poteau called on me himself. He was still as neat and spruce as he had been by the shores of Lake Geneva; but his quick bright look was gone, though he was as voluble as ever. He apologised very much for the liberty he had taken; he hoped I would listen to him and would try to help him; he was sure I could be of the greatest use. Marie would listen to me, though not to him. I said I would do what I could to persuade his wife, but had he not been wrong in deceiving her?

"Ah, madame," he replied, "listen to me, and you will see that it is not I who am in the wrong now. She is cruel to me—to me, who love her so well. Think of it altogether, dear madame, from the first. You may think that I was too ambitious, but it is not for my own sake only that I want to be rich. It is for hers, too—quite as much for her as for me. I wanted to be able by-and-by to give her comforts and luxuries, that she would have silk to wear and even jewels, that she should drink good wine, and have something to ride in if she wanted to go anywhere. And I would have done it all—more and better, perhaps, than you think, madame; more than she ever had any idea of. Then, you know, I was disappointed with the *café*, the expenses were so heavy. It was sure to come all right after a while, but meantime—and my father would not help me. He thought my ideas were foolish;

he thought that I should take a small farm, and that Marie should work as my mother had worked when she was first married. Madame, I say again, it was for her I acted as I did. You know what she is—how beautiful, how like a queen; and I couldn't bear to think that she should toil as our peasant women do, and be bent and worn and broken with the constant work. If I had been a rich man, madame, she should have had anything she could want. As it was, I could only think for her and plan and scheme for her. And then it seemed that my schemes were going wrong through no fault of mine. And then there came the chance of her going with you, and that put everything right again. I know you think I was rather avaricious about the terms, but I could not help it, and Marie agreed with me that it was right that she should go. And I was glad to think that she was so comfortable, with plenty of good food, and every day *de bon vin de Bourgogne*. All that time I was living like a dog. I wouldn't spend a sou if I could help it. I am ashamed to say how I lived. And then, when the baby died, I saw at once what might take place. I knew she would cry and cry, and then fret and grieve, and then—you know, madame. And it might not be good for madame's little boy if one had to find another nurse. I thought of that too; madame had been so kind. And then was I to lose all I had been working for, as I might do if I didn't pay the last instalment? No, madame; I think I acted rightly, and I would do the same again. It is she who is wrong, to be so cruel and unforgiving."

"I can't give you much idea of how poor M. Poteau said all this—of his rapid gestures and appealing tones. When he spoke of the death of the baby he almost broke down.

"It is there that she is so cruel, madame; she seems to think that I didn't grieve for its death. It was a dreadful day for me when the poor innocent died. I cannot tell you how I felt it, and I had to bear it alone too."

"I was touched too by his description of what had been done to celebrate Marie's return—the flag from the front window, the festoons carefully cut out of coloured paper, and the dinner that was got ready—the bottle of best wine from his father's cellar. You and I, who know something of the life of these people, can easily picture the scene. By inquiry I learned that he had sold his business. For some weeks he had had the hope that Marie would return to him; but when at last he could hope no longer,

then he felt that he must get away from Morges. Even in the midst of his distress he had been astute enough to get a good price for his *café*. He had divined that Marie had taken refuge with me, and he had come to London to be near her at least. He expected to find work as waiter in a hotel restaurant or club.

‘In a week or so he called on me again. In the meantime I had spoken to his wife, and found her quite obstinate. She cried when I pressed her hard, but there was no moving her. Her husband had sent her away, and had let her baby die and had deceived her shamefully, and she would never speak to him again. There was no changing her from that.

‘And she implored me not to separate her from Bertie—her dear child—all she had to love.

‘I had told my husband the whole story, and he was strongly of opinion that I ought not to keep Marie in the house—that I was acting wrongly in encouraging her. Whether I should ever have had resolution enough to tell her she must go, and to withstand her entreaties, I don’t know; but I wasn’t put to the test, for M. Poteau himself begged me not to send her away. By-and-by she would relent, he said, and he must wait.

‘And the poor fellow has been waiting ever since. He has kept himself a good deal in the background, but he has called on me once or twice. Once he brought some trinkets which she had left, and I remember too one Sunday morning that he paid me a visit. He was very respectful and polite, but after a little while he broke out into bitter complaints against his wife. She could never have cared for him. She really wanted to be free from him—perhaps she wanted some one else; his having deceived her about the baby was only an excuse to get away from him. I let him run on in this wild way for some time, and then at last he produced a little packet.

‘“It is for her, madame. To-day is her *jour de fête*, and she always liked these dried fruits; and this cheese is from her own village.”

‘This was the last time I saw him—that is where the story stays now. Marie has not softened; she is only more silent and more mournful. I think I should be angry with her if I didn’t see how much she suffers, and if she were not so fond of Bertie, for she idolises that child.’

This was Marie’s story, as Mrs. Calhoun told it me; and we talked it over for some time till it was quite late, and our

husbands returned from the club, whither they had gravitated a second time.

'You have been telling Mrs. Leyton about Marie,' said Mr. Calhoun, with an air of profound insight. 'Now I can add a later chapter to the story. Poteau is here, and not two hundred yards off.'

We were both interested, curious, interrogative.

'Yes,' he continued, 'he's the new waiter at the club. He brought me my whisky and soda.'

'He can't bear to let her out of his sight,' said Mrs. Calhoun. 'What devotion! I pity the poor fellow.'

'The poor fellow is a fool,' said Mr. Calhoun decisively. 'Women don't care for that dog-like devotion; they despise it, and perhaps they're not far wrong. He should go away and leave her alone; or let him pick up with some one else, or make a pretence of doing so. That would bring her round sooner than any amount of what you call devotion, and what I think is downright folly.'

Mr. Calhoun made a prompt exit after these words, perhaps being doubtful of their effect. For fully five minutes I indulged in the luxury of hating him secretly. In justice to my sex I detested him with all my might. But perhaps he was right after all.

### CHAPTER III.

I STAYED with Mrs. Calhoun for about a month after that. During this time I had ample opportunity of becoming closely acquainted with Marie. When she was walking with Bertie in the garden I would often be there; and little by little I broke through her reserve, and got her to talk about herself and her native village, for I was pretty familiar with the shores of Lake Geneva and with the Canton Vaud, and Marie seemed pleased to talk to anyone who knew the places where she had lived. It was with set purpose that I put myself in Marie's way, and tried to win her confidence. I hoped to be able to heal the breach, and bring the divided couple together again, and in all I said I was really leading up to that subject; but I made little progress. Marie was very silent and sombre. Even when the discourse was of her dear country she preferred listening to talking, and at the least

reference or remote allusion to her domestic affairs she froze into absolute dumbness.

I was not altogether discouraged, and one day she said, in reply to something I had been inquiring, 'Madame, I see you have been told my story, and you think I am wrong and want to put me right. But no, my dear lady, you cannot do it. I am only an ignorant woman, and madame is learned as well as good and kind; but I know what is right for me. I feel it, and I cannot do otherwise. Think, madame!' she broke out, with blazing eyes. 'He wrote to me, "Baby is very well," and the poor child was lying dead in the house—in the very house he was writing in; and just when he had buried it he writes, "Baby is quite well, and you will find him grown." Look, madame! if he had written the whole truth, and if I was then obliged to go home—I believe, madame, my mistress, who is an angel, would have paid me my wages all the same; but if not, if he must sell his *café* and start work again, I should have worked with him and borne all patiently, for what would all be beside the death of my sweet baby? And there is one thing more, though I am perhaps too bold in saying it. As madame knows, my mistress has spoken to me about this, and tried to persuade me; but when she could not do it, why should madame, whom I hardly know, hope to succeed? But I am grateful to you, madame,' she added afterwards, in a changed voice.

Those who are energetically anxious to benefit others have often to console themselves for the mischief they do by reflecting on the excellence of their intentions. I was glad to think that my superfluous zeal had not probably done any harm. I didn't approach the subject again, but a few days afterwards Marie brought it up of her own accord.

'You know my husband is here, madame?' she said to me.

I assented.

'He has wanted to see me, and has called here once or twice, but I have always refused. Now he has sent me this letter.'

M. Poteau commenced his letter by saying that it was the last he would write. His long patience had at last been tired out by his wife's obstinacy. When his time was up at the club he should go away to America, and Marie would be troubled with him no more. She had never loved him, and now at last he had ceased to love her. Before he went he would send her some money. All the wages she had sent him from Mrs. Calhoun

would be returned to her, and her *dot*—all she had brought with her—should be given back; and then everything would be over between them. He would sail away to America, and they would never see each other again.

This was the purport of the letter which Marie gave me to read. I perused it very carefully, went through it three times to see if I could discover any last hope of a reconciliation latent in it. Had M. Poteau really decided to leave his wife, or was the letter written merely to frighten her into forgiveness? I handed the letter back to Marie, and looked at her inquiringly.

‘For me,’ she said, ‘he may do as he likes, madame. I do not mind. But it is base of him to go to America, and say he has no wife, and deceive some girl worse than he deceived me.’

‘And you will let him go, Marie?’

‘Certainly, madame. I could not stop him now, but I would not if I could. What he says is just. We are now free from each other, and I am glad he will now leave me alone.’

But her mouth quivered as she said it.

Marie asked me not to mention the letter to Mrs. Calhoun.

‘It might trouble her,’ she said.

But it was not easy to refrain; and that evening after dinner we were discussing the question in the drawing-room, three of us, for my husband was on the Scotch moors. I hoped Marie would yield and all be arranged amicably at last, but Mrs. Calhoun thought not.

‘I know the poor girl’s obstinacy too well,’ she said.

Her husband took the opposite view.

‘She’ll come round,’ he prophesied. ‘That letter’s the most sensible thing the poor fellow has done yet.’

‘And if she doesn’t?’ said I.

‘Then,’ he replied, ‘I hope Poteau will do as he says. I think he will. The mention of America shows that he is thinking of the facilities for divorce which that great country affords.’

And then Mr. Calhoun bethought himself of his evening rubber, and departed to the club.

The days went by, and we both watched Marie, but she made no sign; only looked paler, and was more sad and silent than ever. Except to her darling Bertie she hardly spoke.

Then one day M. Poteau called to make his respectful adieux to Mrs. Calhoun, and to thank her for what she had done and had tried to do; and he brought too the money he had spoken



of for Marie, which he begged Mrs. Calhoun would keep for her. The interview did not last five minutes, and when Mrs. Calhoun told me of it I asked her if she had not tried to persuade him to stop a little longer.

'No,' she said; 'I don't see that it would be of any use.'

'And you will say nothing to Marie?'

'Nothing more. All that I could say has been already said, and to no purpose. It is very, very sad; but we cannot prevent them drifting hopelessly apart. There is no help now.'

The next afternoon I was driving with Mrs. Calhoun in her small basket chaise. She had alighted to pay a call, and I was waiting for her when I saw Marie turn the corner of the street and come towards me. The little boy was with her; but he had a hoop, and he was trundling it up and down the street—not very skilfully, but to his own evident satisfaction. A man came out of a neighbouring house, and I noticed while he was yet some distance off Marie's face became rigid and hard, and her eyes assumed a fixed stare. Just as he passed a carriage dashed round the corner at full speed. Marie turned to look for her little charge, whom for the first time she had allowed to lag behind out of her sight. He, intent on his hoop, was crossing the street right before the carriage, when he stumbled and fell in the direct path of the carriage. Marie uttered a scream and dashed forward; but she was too far off to do any good to the little fellow, who lay there unable to rise quickly. But the man I have mentioned darted out into the street, picked him up, and literally threw him into the arms of his nurse. Then the rescuer himself reeled and fell, and was trampled under the hoofs of the horse, which could not be stopped till one wheel had passed over the poor man. He was picked up unconscious, dreadfully bruised and bleeding. I called to the bystanders to bring him to the pony chaise.

'Put him on the seat,' I said, 'and take him to the doctor.'

They lifted him up carefully—he was still unconscious. Then I noticed Marie—she was pale and trembling.

'Madame,' she said, 'that is my husband.'

The wounded man opened his eyes, and for some seconds they rested on her; then he said slowly:

'Have I pleased you at last? I am dying now,' and relapsed into unconsciousness.

Bertie was standing by Marie, pulling at her dress, but she did not notice him. Her gaze was riveted on her husband.

Slowly the chaise drove off, a man leading the horses. Marie followed. Then the other carriage drove off, and when Mrs. Calhoun came out from her friend's house there was no sign of the accident but the little knot of those who remained to talk over the affair. Bertie had not been hurt and had left off crying. As we walked back slowly together I told her what had happened. Marie did not return to the house till the evening of the next day. Then she came into the drawing-room where we were sitting.

'Madame,' she cried, 'he will live, he will live! The doctor says so. And he will forgive me. I loved him all along, I am sure of it now—it was only pride that made me cruel and wicked. And now, when he is better, I will be his slave, I will——'

She burst into tears; sobs checked her utterance.

'Perhaps he may not get better,' she said at length, and broke down completely.

Marie's fears were not realised—her husband did recover. I had left the Island, but Mrs. Calhoun's letters brought me constant news of him. And finally I heard of his complete convalescence and departure with his wife.

'Their leave-taking,' she wrote, 'was most touching. I insisted on their having lunch with me, and I sent my husband out and had them to myself. It was beautiful to see Marie with all her simple stateliness, but now tender and loving, her radiant happiness softened and subdued by penitence and deep regret for the past. I quite understood why she wanted to take leave of Bertie alone. She did not wish her husband to see that she was sacrificing anything in returning to him. And when she had left the room I expressed to M. Poteau my gratitude for his having saved Bertie's life, and I gave him an envelope which contained a cheque—the expression of my husband's thankfulness.

"Don't open it now," I said, "but to-morrow, or the day after."

'But for once his volubility deserted him. He limped about the room—he will always be a little lame—but didn't manage to say anything, and Marie came down and they set out for the station.

"Oh, madame!" he said, "now we make a fresh start—*c'est un second voyage de nocces que nous commençons*. And when it is over I have some plans. Marie will see that it is good to have a husband who can make his way in the world."

'And so they went away, hand in hand, and Marie's story is now complete.'

So wrote Mrs. Calhoun. But I can add another incident, for four years afterwards I saw Marie again. I was at Vevey, where I had gone to leave my eldest daughter at school, and walking slowly down the quay I observed the name Poteau on a corner house. There was an awning in front, and little tables at which one or two persons were drinking vermouth. The house was inscribed 'Hôtel et Restaurant Poteau,' and there were a good many other inscriptions written over its front. I stood for a little time and read: 'Déjeuners et diners à la carte ou à prix fixe. Table d'hôte, 6.30, 2 fr. 50 c. Salon de lecture.' I had not perused the whole house-front when a man came out and begged me to enter.

'I am M. Poteau,' he said. 'My wife has seen you. You are the friend of Madame Calhoun.'

And then Marie came forward and greeted me warmly. She was not changed, except that she looked cheerful and happy. She had a great deal to ask about Mrs. Calhoun and Bertie, and it was long before her curiosity was satisfied. M. Poteau meantime was impatient to show me his hotel—the *salle-à-manger*, large and airy; the *salon de lecture*, small, but with a piano and an English paper, the garden at the back, shady and cool, were all pointed out to me with enthusiasm.

'The hotel begins to march, madame; we have had several English people, and now we have two ladies from Boston who have been here more than a month, and they are all well satisfied, and say they will recommend me. And'—M. Poteau sank his voice to a whisper—'I have my eye on a hotel in Montreux which will soon be for sale—*un hôtel du premier rang*, madame.'

Then Marie took me upstairs to a room where, in a child's cot, a rosy infant of about two years old was sleeping.

'God has been very good to me,' she said, 'and I am very happy. Only I think sometimes how wretched and miserable I was through all those years, and how it was my own fault.'

M. Poteau came in and glanced at his wife and then at the child. He pointed out to me the lace with which the baby's frock was fringed.

'*Un peu de luxe, n'est-ce pas, madame?* But that hurts not; *c'est pour monsieur mon fils*, and she likes it too. *La reine le veut*, you know, madame.'

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